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Primitive Scenes and Festivals

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CANONS OF GIANT ART

DANCE OF THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

LISZT

A BACKGROUND TO DOMENICO SCARLATTI

LA VIE PARISIENNE

VALE DES FLEURS

POLTERGEISTS

★

written in collaboration with

Francis Bamford

EDINBURGH

Sacheverell Sitwell

PRIMITIVE SCENES
AND
FESTIVALS

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To my Sister, Edith Sitwell

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Book I

Landscape of the Megaliths

Book I

Introductory

Some terrific catastrophe, one would say. 'We started the most beautiful fire I have yet seen,' the Airman will tell us to-morrow evening, in the nine o'clock news. But what does Airman mean so long ago! Could they but know him in the canteen, resting with his feet upon the stove, before he climbs into his cockpit. Before he goes up into the cold with powers of life and death over all below! Then, not a town burning. No! no! not more than the sunset down the plain. We are in its light, but it is many miles away: another element: an ocean, an archipelago on fire. And still no noise. It flames without a sound.

Keep still! listen! was that the first droning? Could he come flying, out of that sea of fire?

It has been raining.

There are pools of water into which the flame has spilt. It is as blood where it runs into the water. It does not mix. Some parts of each puddle have no red in them. But they turn a deeper and a deeper red. They are blood entirely until you dip your hand in them. Then, it is soft rainwater with a little dust or mud. And you can cup it in your hand. But it does not dye your fingers. It is another element: into which the moun-

A Flute made from an Eagle's Wing

tains lean, but they are white with snow. And so far away : so many days' journey. Lost to sight, perhaps, at the end of that. How red it has become! Because of the emptiness. There are so often red sunsets on this empty plain. Who knows where it ends! It may slide into the ocean. With strange shells upon its sands. Or travel the circumference and come back again : here, below our feet, journeying out of the sunrise. In the morning and the evening, whichever way you look, there is fire in the sky.

To-night it is the solstice, when to-day and to-morrow have scarce the dark between them. The night of the holocaust which must stain the earth and sink into the soil! The dark hour of the hecatomb that must dye the morning!

And now we hear a shepherd's pipe. It is no Syrinx reed ; but a shrill and piercing music. A bone, open at both ends, which requires much force of lungs. The notes are forlorn and wild. It is a flute made from an eagle's wing. The skull and beak are whitening on the ground. What does the flute tell us? That we are in a land of mountains, among flocks and herds. But it is not the only music. There are often, as well, terrible voices out of the air, with lightning before them. Behind us the whole firmament is on fire.

It is the primitive world. So unchanging are their habits and their customs that a hundred, or five hundred years, make little difference. And it is the same in space. The same beliefs, same persons, a thousand miles, or more, apart. Even in different continents. But, to those concerned, this is the only life they know. Their sensation is that they are the living. We see the ugly, the beautiful, the terrifying, with their eyes. Where do we find ourselves? It does not matter much. The world has been long inhabited by men. Here and now they live in huts or caves ; and, in another land, in buildings of cut stone. All is yet strange, where they have begun to notice it. Meanwhile, the youth and beauty of the world

Golden Fleece and Golden Honeycomb

are theirs. A golden age: but slow, so slow. Time scarcely moves; but a man's wisdom dies with him. Look how beautiful the world can be! It cannot end with death. It hurts to be born: and it is pain to die. The first nostalgia is for a golden past. For the sunset of yesterday. But, now, the whole firmament shakes with fire.

The youth and beauty of the world are for to-day. All things have primal importance, still, and are unsullied. The shepherd's flute is made out of an eagle's wing. Nothing is trivial or little. Even a rough stone wall has a grain like wheaten bread. The stones are gold with lichen: or like golden maize. There are golden fleece and golden honeycomb. All in the mind's eye. For this is the youth of the imagination. It transcends all things and gilds the every day. Even the footsteps are linked up by a golden chain. In meadows of the early months, where every footstep bruises the spring flowers. The snowfields, too, are pocked with footmarks. It is theirs to kill all things they find and show no mercy, while this world lies virgin to be wooed, or lost.

With what majesty they walk, who could but crawl upon the earth! They are kings and priests: children and ancients: all the race of men. To ourselves, this is the savage canon. Thus far, no further, our eyes must convince us of a golden age. For it is thus with their collaterals to-day. They have that nobility. It is their birthright which they have not lost. How much more, when the world of men was young! Then, disease and illness harked back to the past, to our bestial ancestry from which they had emerged. Not that the animal world is old and ill: but the degree above that, the crawl that came when man no longer ran and before he walked, thus, in dignity, has left its mark upon him. He has the brute shortcomings, and in the same season, falls from heaven.

The truth of a golden age is in their bearing and the way they walk. What their hands touched, with no forethought,

Instinct in the Primitive Arts

became a living art. In that dominion they could do no wrong. It was instinct, and not born of knowledge. Does not this prove where the kingdom of the arts is found! In the heart and senses more than in the brain. It comes in childhood and it can return with age. In that early time it was sufficient that they should lift their hands. The wilderness blossomed. The primal emptiness held its flowers for them. Instinct took them to the golden petals.

It was enough that they should paint or weave, or carve or spin, and the god came down into them. There is only that in explanation. They had no science; but their hands could not go wrong. In little things, for they had no architecture. In this sense they were immortals: they were gods who walked the earth transcending the sights and sounds of day. Our toil and trouble cannot bring us equal to them. We live in a world of agonies where creation is all pain. It was natural to them: to the extent that many savage tribes are to be envied, to-day, for what their eyes have seen and what their hands have made. They have that advantage upon the flats and slums. But this cult of the primitive has many fallacies. In history, the golden age has turned into an age of lead, or iron. In such we live to-day; for, in the arts, it was an age of gold not much more than a hundred years ago. It is to illustrate the fall of man that some part of these pages has been written. He fell out of paradise into the wars and slums, though surrounded on every side by the fruits and flowers of heaven. It was himself, and he alone, who turned the world to blood and smoke. Herein we sing those mingled beauties, tinged with fire, taking warning from them while we delight, sometimes, in their innocence, praising the sweet pageant of a happier world.

So it is, anywhere in high antiquity, taking that for its achievement and not in respect to epoch. It may be five thousand, or five hundred years ago, but the parallel or continuity is true, and so is the spectacle of a world on fire,

Noises in the Sky

in the morning and the evening. The disasters of mankind, bred of their ignorance, are just as punctual. It is easy, in this present, to foretell the past. To develop the tragedy and inform the audience of what is coming. And, while our eyes look back, we do not see what lies in front of us. Another world, a firmament on fire again. A portent: or portending nothing? No more than a spectacle, a pageant: something done to impress, or for its own pleasure. Who can tell? We would need the lives of many generations to follow down their curves. There is not enough evidence in one short lifetime. We are secure, at least, in the grandeurs and follies of mankind. The Garden of Eden is no parable: nor the tale that a serpent crept into the fruit.

It has bitten deep. The poison of its fang has pierced into the core. The fruit is rotten and about to fall. So, one after another, do civilizations perish of their own contagion. The sunrise: the golden noon: the sunset: and it is done. Though all this is but one day alone. There was yesterday: and there will be to-morrow. No need to despair: but only to fall asleep and wake up in a hundred or a thousand years. Which it is not ours to do. Except in poetry, or the arts of contemplation, through the glass pane, or in the false daylight of the library, where we are safe ourselves, or think that it is so. Wisdom surely perishes, and all must be learnt again, upon another time. But listen! was that the first droning?

Here we deal not with wisdom but with intuition. These are not things learned: but they are known by instinct. Their psyche is in the heart and blood more than of the brain. In every language there is the saying 'learned by heart', or 'by ear'; going back to early days before all men could read and write. Such a phrase is true description of the processes of intuition, even though its real application is to the wearisome repetitions of the schools of magic. They were not even certain that the centres of human intelligence lay in

Flourishes of the Caboceers

the brain; and, for their own purposes, they were right in this. Its origins were in the human emotions and in the inner consciousness. Out of this, beside the breath of beauty, there proceeded an exhalation or miasma, the nightmare vapourings and imaginations, which took solid form of good or bad and filled the primal emptiness. A shadow kingdom, not measured by the gnomon.

In degree of time their heaven of the adolescent withered and grew stale. It held more shadows than there were forms of light. Earth, and sky, and underworld were darkened by them. Such were corruptions of religion, for it has never been enough that mankind should enjoy the fruits of the world without his creating for himself, out of his conscience, an impediment to his desires. How much of the lives, of how many millions of men and women, have been occupied with these obsessions! There is, in fact, no reason for a heaven and a hell. These are inner conceptions, and their only reality is from within. No voice has ever spoken out of either shadow. There has been eternal silence since the dawn of time. Upon earth we are among the living; and, when we die, we remain with them, in dust or ashes, or in some survival. Who can tell? This, though how little, is some palliation. All, through weakness, must see themselves as silent witnesses, for they are afraid of the utter emptiness and dare not think of that. We may smile at the ancients who were buried with their treasures; but probably the majority of living beings cannot think of the afterworld but in terms of the present. It is earliest and latest of human illusions, ending, when it is dispelled, in anarchy of the soul. Therefore, the theme of heaven, and the bloody hecatomb.

Suddenly, we hear the trumpets of the caboceers.

All the superior captains have peculiar flourishes or strains for their horns, adapted to short sentences, which are

Town Drummers

always recognized, and will be repeated by any person you may meet walking in the streets. These horns are very large, and being graduated like the flutes, their fanfares have a martial and grand effect.

The King's horns utter : 'I pass all kings in the world.' The caboceers : 'Men and women, do you do right now?' 'No one dares trouble me.' 'Whilst I live no harm can come.' The words of some of these sentences are almost expressible by the notes of the horns. There are other instruments, as well : flutes and viols and drums. In front go the messengers : in gold breastplates, their long hair hanging in twists like a thrum mop. We hear these horns from all over the town, their meaning being known to all, man, woman, and child. Voices of wood, or metal, or true horn, of boastful accent ; breathing authority, or war ; advancing, falling back ; or rolled in triumph. There is terrible and prolonged drumming. And, as though to emphasize the horror of that sound, the men called town drummers are only allowed to die standing, and when expiring are snatched up, and supported in that posture. Afterwards the body is exhibited, chalked all over, in emphasis of death. Not yet : but it could be in prophecy of that. We hear, also, the sea conch, a marine trumpeting, as though a shaggy head was raised out of the sea. Perhaps near to it in the procession will walk the executioners in their immense caps of shaggy black skins : indeed their black shaggy caps and vests give them the appearance of bears rather than of men. But, in particular, it is the trumpets of the caboceers breathing forth their imperious sentences, and the sensation that there is an enormous crowd, all hurrying along.

It is dark still. Not deep night, but the pallid interval, the semitone, an empty obscurity in which all can see their way. Not yet light and, in fact, timed for that. Earlier, as near to midnight as they could judge, the King's horns had gone to the marketplace and flourished a peculiar or special strain.

Procession of the Images

This was the beginning of the ceremony. Its word was that all should attend in person. The troops of women at once daubed their faces, arms and breasts with a red paint of clay, as though near enough to what would happen in an hour or two to besmear themselves with blood. Men put on their finest garments. The caboceers have loose white trousers, great boots of dull red leather to half-way up the thigh, and a cap of immense plumes of eagles' feathers that spring from a socket made of gilded ram's horns. This is fastened under the chin with bands of cowrie shells. Their wrists are hung with horses' tails. So they set forth, their caps of eagles' feathers nodding on the air. More than a hundred bands of music burst out, at once, with the particular fanfares of the caboceers. Mingling with these are the soft responses of the flutes. And so the processions form. We meet them pouring down the streets. Warriors are carrying the idols of the nation, bestial shapes, not even human; and the stool of execution, clotted in blood, and partly covered with a cawl of fat. These heavy objects and uncouth statues look, in the half-light, like lifesize effigies, and their bearers seem to stumble under them. They carry them upon their heads in shallow pans of brass, but dully gleaming. Their pace is quickening. Soon, they will come upon the scene.

May Morning

Lean down! Lean down to the grass! The white trumpet of the convolvulus is the pattern of the world. You have woken on a young earth. How fresh and sweet the morning is! The pale dew is the emanation of that moonlight, white as a millstone.

The stalk of the trumpet flower is a little wet cord, a little wet string tying it down to the damp earth, and the breath upon it is like ice to the fingernails. Dew will drop from it. You can rub its petals back into life. The morning touches it; and, at sight of the sun, slowly, slowly, it opens into life. Its tissues thrill with the heat and their starch wakens in the petals and stiffens them. The trumpet opens.

The white convolvulus opens in the sun. Held in the air it becomes a huge white hood hiding half the sky, higher than the white cone of Etna, the snow mountain over the blue bay. Like Etna, it is imminent and yet remote; with no foot, nor fundament, but floating in the sky. It is ethereal, intangible, but holds the heavens.

And looking from the trumpet flower, along its calyx, that pyramid or dunce's cap, that cone or huge white tent, opens in geometry towards a green pyramid that towers out of the plain. It is far off. A hill of artifice; but as simple as a hill,

Avebury Circle

piled up, or pressed out of, the green meadow. It tallies its geometry with the trumpet flower. There need be nothing in the world but that pyramid and the convolvulus. If you are looking from the trumpet flower to the pyramid while an aeroplane passes overhead, it is so much the better. There is nothing between the youth of man and his old age. The golden age and the age of gold are both shining in the sky; or it is no more than one of those mornings when sun and moon burn together from opposite poles of the heavens. It may, in fact, be another morning that has come, proclaimed by the little shining light that moves and wheels and climbs into invisibility and by the frightened birds, flying as if before a storm.

These are the words of a painter.¹ 'Last summer I walked in a field near Avebury where two rough monoliths stand up, sixteen feet high, miraculously patterned with black and orange lichen, remnants of the avenue of stones which led to the Great Circle. A mile away, a green pyramid casts a gigantic shadow. In the hedge, at hand, the white trumpet of a convolvulus turns from its spiral stem, following the sun.'

The creeping shadow of that green pyramid, or cone, makes as sure a measure of time as any dandelion clock. But both, be it marked, are at the mercy of the wind and rain. Both are arbitrary and changing in their moods. The dandelion, which could be compared in symbol to the Great Circle, or even to the whole universe of stars, is a flaming sun, and another day, is but a mane of mist to be blown upon and dissipated in a breath. But the extreme of the material and the immaterial world, the physical and the metaphysical opposites, meet in this geometry of pyramid to flower. Held close to the eyes, the paper cone or crown is as important as the green pyramid a mile away. Nothing else is of any moment.

¹ Paul Nash, in a preface to his paintings, 1934.

The Spire of Sarum

The paper crown, the dunce's cap, tallies with the pyramid of Egypt.

If left upon its stem, the white convolvulus turns upon its green foot following the sun. Its trumpet opens, and in the evening, will be limp and shut. But the green pyramid which answers to it in the air has a shade, in light of the moon, that is yet more antique and ruthless than the shadow of it by day. It comes of the ilex world, of bronze armour and of the age of amber.

Together, and between them, the flower and the pyramid people the plain. The King of their race must be an 'Ancient' of William Blake; or he is the figure from the tomb of Edward III in Westminster Abbey. Not far away the spire of Sarum, an attenuated tent in stone, a steeple like a witch's hat, a thin, thin, pyramid, in which the falcons dwell, hangs in grey permanence upon the air, rising to four hundred feet and more, as high, or nearly so, as the tent of Kheops. The needle strength of it pierces and stays upon the air, as high as a little hill, a hill that would hold a drift of snow. No thicker than a man's waist the extremity of its thinness strides against the winds. It is alone, in utter solitude, save for the falcons' wings, the brushing of their feathers on the stone, the crying of their young. But that other, the earthbound pyramid not many miles away, the sister to the trumpet flower, has an antiquity which, to this, is as though the wooden scaffolding had but just been taken down, as if the workmen and artificers who had not yet left the roofs below would still, for a few weeks longer, look up through the showers at their handiwork above and see the sunlight strike first upon the tent walls before it came down lower to the roof.

The King must be nightgowned and have the beard of a patriarch. He is a shepherd King: his wealth is in flocks and herds. His pastoral kingdom has for its capital the sacred plain. He is fair bearded, with long fair locks that touch his

'Ancients' of the Plain

shoulders, a robe of lambs' wool and a clasp and belt of river gold. It is a twisted torque that will bend with the fingers, the gold of apple trees more than of the orange grove. His staff is a shepherd's crook.

This 'Ancient' of the blue eyes has a straightness of nose and forehead that makes him in the image of a god. His attendants are young men with braided locks wearing the trousers of the Celt or Gaul. They are satellites or lesser gods. Their houses are the beehive hut, built of wattles that make pens or hedges for the lambs, great rings like villages on the green plain and upon the sloping downs. They move their houses with the herds, dwelling in the pastures. They take down the hurdles and move in royal progress to another space of green. There, they built again and the beehive hut rises beside the cropping of the lawns. Smoke from the firecomb fire climbs into the air, for their meat cooks slowly in the charcoal embers.

Women are spinning in the tent door. The maidens are pastime for the King or god; their open, loose raiment flutters in the wind. They dance barefoot to the sheepskin drum. Their songs of innocence beguile the open meadows. They dance in a long file, hand linked in hand, on buttercup and dandelion and on the field of daisies. Shepherd's pipe, the tambourine and sheepskin drum, make music for them.

The giant pyramid casts its shadow close at hand, for it is the sacred plain. And now, to a solemn twanging of the plectrum, the priests have come who dwell in the wood of yew trees. When the red berries hang upon the boughs, when the tree stems are wet and red with rain, it is then that they prophesy and always of evil, like the dark, dark leaves. The berries are of red, red flesh, a maiden or a waxen flesh thrown down by the bird's bill, and staining like a stain of blood. That is in winter, when there is thick mist upon the chalk-hills, when the night comes early. But, now, it is May Morn-



THE TOMB OF EDWARD III IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Virgin Death

ing, the summer festival; the yew trees have fresh shoots of green; the giant pyramid is a daisy hill: the cuckoo has come back: there should be no word of war.

Instead, the dying who bargained for their places are brought from far off to be buried. For the Great Circle, the ring of monoliths, is holy ground and halfway to the heavens. Their god is the summer solstice, who darts in a line of fire out of the measureless distance on to the altar stone and must touch on blood, the red dye of the living. He must dip his light in it, or all will die. His trail of fire is god of the river gold. Gold is the sign of him, sprinkled on the waters. There is gold on the hair of children, in fleeces, and in the ripened corn. The starlight is golden and shines in punctual courses that wisdom can foretell. As for blood, the ripe apple has its sap: the fir tree runs in resin: there is blood in all things that walk or fly: the sweet grass exudes in dew: the clouds drop rain: if fire is the force of life, blood is its factor.

And so there is a sacrifice to the golden principle, to the god of fire. The altar stone has a cup for blood and a scooped-out rivulet watering its lichen. A virgin, gently weeping, is led to this marriage bed and dies with short suffering. The knife enters her, below her breast; the thrust of it is a dying and dreadful ecstasy, a piercing of her secret into her heart and mind and sight. Her mind reels and the earth turns black. Her heart was meant for this, to be shivered at a blow. She is dead, stone dead; but the heart of her is plucked out and held up in the light, still quivering, still dripping down its tears. This was the deed of blood; the altar death: the staining of the marriage bed. It is the Aubade, or morning song, the fine May Morning.

That red heart held up in the air, a heart as red as the yew berries, is no less than a symbol. The simplicity of its double curves, opening as the curves of an apple, or any fruit, and thinning to a point, to a root point such as digs into the earth,

The Human Heart

is in sign of the dual nature of the heart, its beating which is the clock or hub of life, and that other aspect of the heart which makes it the soul or psyche of the emotions and even in the eyes of antiquity, the centre of human intelligence. It is in part, therefore, the fruit which hangs in air and the root which digs underground. And, held bleeding in the hand, its image answers to the Orient or rising sun like a coalescence of two suns, two parhelions, the mating, in little replica, of the renewal of morning, its function in giving life, and the certainty that some purpose, some direction in emotion, must lie behind that never failing purpose. Not only this, but the simplicity of its shape—a symbol which is the more telling because it is universal to all human beings and not differentiated, as it had been a human head, by features known and recognizable in their sleep of death, still living, even, if it is compared to that, for it beats and quivers, it is like a young bird, a fledgling bird held tightly in the hand, that throbs and flutters, that struggles to be free—this simplicity and poignancy give it primal significance and the importance, as symbol, that is possessed by the Great Circle of the monoliths and by the green pyramid that throws its gigantic shadow from a mile away. That bleeding heart is the most living thing on earth for every man and woman is awed and silent at the sight of it. The stone altars and the hill of earth are still; but the living god, the sun god, climbs unencumbered into the aether while the pallid nightshell dies like that virgin and burns, pale and bloodless, on the hem of night.

Thus they killed the ewe lamb, or virgin, of the shepherd King. His godlike features are unmoved at this, since there are many others and it is the custom.

On every hand there are the signs of fate. The green pyramid is in proof of superstition: the stone circles are a work of terror. One morning, from the remotest distance, and at another turn of time, that tent or thin spire of stone will shed

Daughters of Albion

its sheathe of timbers and climb upon the air. It is but another pyramid. On another morning, for those who look for signs, a little shining light will move and wheel and climb into invisibility, proclaimed by the frightened birds that fly as if before a storm. Nothing has changed. It is accepted that the living must fall down from the sky. This is even in sacrifice, for, otherwise, the living would not prosper. Some of their number must be taken from them and the rest will mount higher on their ashes. There are, only, no new pyramids, no tents of superstition, no shadows on the plain. In all else the world has not changed.

Meanwhile, the daughters of Albion dance upon the hills in long gowns. The May Morning has no murmur but the bleating of their lambs, no stir but the wind bellying their dresses. They dance like a lapful of flowers dropped from a cloud and blowing in the wind. Hand in hand, they make the pattern of the ring or circle. Or they are the cloud, itself, wrecked or disastered upon the hill. And the sun has built himself a stony or chalk-white eminence, a cumulus of cloud. This alters to his pace, climbing ever higher. Below, the Great Circle of stone is no more than a mushroom ring, a powdering of mushrooms or white daisies on the plain. And the one ring, the ring of maidens, blows like chaff against the immobility of the other.

But lean down! Lean down to the grass! The white trumpet of the convolvulus has turned, ever so little, on its spiral stem. This is its worship, or its morning song. The geometry is flowing and has no fixed point. It follows its appointed courses: the shining light, the chariot, and the clouds, now loosed from their yoke, and feeding, low down, upon the hills. Long shadows play across the plain. For vales of the white horse lie on either hand; and there are giants, carved from chalk, upon the downs. The monoliths are men of stone and their shadows bow before them. Each has his cloak of

Beech Groves

time: it is shadowy and of no substance, more ghostly than the dandelion in his mane of mist. Time is but a shadow; but it is built of days.

The music, this May Morning, is the bleating of the lambs, for they frisk and caper, and in their innocence they do not know the world. Each lamb runs blindly to its elders for the food of life. Often they are turned away. There is only one who loves them. In innocence there is affection everywhere and none to deny it. Already, long ago, men have been corrupted. It is only the morning that is not tainted, and for song of innocence it has this bleating of the lambs.

Their woollen curls are for pastoral gold, as golden as the golden torque. The King wears the lambs' wool, in a long robe like a nightgown. But that was the Plantagenet. The stiffness of his nightgown was of cloth of gold. It is only his long locks and the long folds of his dress that relate him to this pastoral plain. In all else he is of another age. And yet, so little difference have their spires or pyramids of stone that this ghost of chain mail enters most easily into the town of wattles. He is the 'Ancient' of the plain. Far away, for there are oats and barley, a church spire, like a stone pyramid or a witch's cap, climbs up out of the corn. The *gentius loci*, or of the land, asserts itself in these parallels in time. This plain of Sarum is palladium of the whole island and its King, who only rules up to the hills, is golden cacique of the earth.

The beech groves are a sacred mystery babbling in words. Their circles are dotted every here and there upon the downs; and even in the silence of summer their interior air is never still. The ilex or the holly wood are more haunted still. It is the round symmetry of the beech grove that gives it sacred character. They are towns or villages of trees. Their dense shade must make a dwelling. All round, and more in number than the shepherd can count, there are these groves.

He will crawl into its edge for shade, but dreads the inner

The Bells of Sarum

heart of it and dare not sleep there. But the heavy hand of it is on his lids and on his forehead. The flower is near to his eyes as he dozes on the bank. Through half-shut eyes he sees the world once more. The patterning of lichen shows upon the monoliths. A mile away, the green pyramid casts its gigantic shadow. And in the hedge, at hand, the white trumpet of the convolvulus points sheer into the heavens, as erect as if it was the cap of snow upon the green pyramid a mile away.

Look once more upon the world! The beech leaves are as solid as a battlement of shields. This is the beech world, or beechen island. Its inner heart is sacred and inviolate; but sleep, a sacred slumber foreshadowing death, waits on the fringes of the wood, even in the cool air at its edges.

Near by, another clump, another grove of pillars, has a robe, a fluttering of raiment in its aisles. Far, far away the needle tent, the spire or pyramid, hangs above the water meadows in a land of little streams and willows. A voice of bells breaks upon the silence, coming out of that distance, note by note, like the winding of the streams, like the chiming of their curves and bends. There will be the smoke of bonfires on the damp, marsh air, the sighing of the bulrushes, daisied meadows, and buttercups for cloth of gold.

But, here, nothing is little. There are flocks in multitude and all the army of the oats. The avenues of stones are made in man's image walking on the earth. That old pyramid, which is haunted ground, holds its green head high out of the plain and the treasure buried deep in it is as safe as on the bed of ocean. The convolvulus has turned away from it; but its day is done, for the sun has climbed above the beech grove and only light and no heat come down through the leaves. It is midday; the nodding, nodding shade descends.

II

Landscape of the Megaliths

C

lose your eyes and open them!

It is a young and yet an old, old world, the land of the dolmen and the megalith. It rises to steep ramparts and to natural strongholds. It drifts with shadows of the clouds: it weeps with rain: it does not wave with corn. It is a land of flocks and herds. It has a wandering or a migrant rhythm and a face that ever changes, for it is not sown and has no smiling harvests. One hill could be armed and held against another hill. But, to-day, the ram's horn trumpet is not blown. There is no sound of war. It is the world three thousand years ago, or more, for a thousand years would mean but little difference; but yet it is to-day, the living moment. How pure and fresh the morning is! It is the land of the cromlech and the menhir, dead as bones of mammoth, but alive, now, in this ancient morning that is so unsullied to our lungs. How sweet the winds taste; and the lark is singing! How to know, from this, that it is thirty centuries ago! But it is not all pastoral. Near by, in the dark wood, the raven builds his nest. There is evil in his sable plumes and in his hopping walk. His inky beak is as the black mask of a mourner. Already, there are omens in the darkened air, shadows and death symbols among the golden living.

Cromlech and Menhir

The megalithic landscape trembles in this morning before the hours were born. We are treading upon sacred ground. These giant stones are the burial cromlechs. There are menhirs, or hoar stones to commemorate an heroic deed, to make a grave, or set up a boundary. They are, also, idols, the galls of the peasantry. Their stone ramparts are cahers, or cashels; their clay forts are the raths or bawns: those upon hills and high places are the duns: clochauns are their beehive huts of stone, closed at the top with a flat slab like a paving stone.

But this is not, in particular, that land of sloes and hazels. It is not here that hawthorn and white damson blow. The cyclopaean scene lies in a hundred lands at once where there is nothing in little. A tree in blossom counts for no more in those bare lands of bones than the spray of the waters in the rocky tarn. We must have this high antiquity with its stones upraised, with tracks and footpaths over the rolling pastures and down the ridgeways and the long green lanes. Though it is not the simple life. The apparent simplification is masked with a hundred subtleties, for the inhabitants dwell in a veritable forest of psychical and magical inventions, the insubstance of which has taken on permanence in its effect upon their lives. This is the population of the primal emptiness. But in no sense do they live alone. They are jostled by the spectral shapes of their imagination, abstractions of their fears and pleasures, which were never simple in outline, or of primal human shape. Their mythology is abstract and complicated. At the same time they are our ancestors. There is no tainting of their skins.

It is peculiar that they moved their flocks and raised their herds where it has been the waste land ever since. The plough does not break the sod where the golden torque lies buried. That has ever been the empty plain; or the green hill that is a pyramid, a dunce's cap, a symbol and a meaning that have

Funeral Games for Patroclus

been forgotten. Not architecture, but a green geometry, set points for calculations, for the courses of the stars, a clock that marks the centuries; or a mound above a hero's skeleton. It is old out of all knowledge. No one knows how old it is. The megalith was already ancient in the wars of Troy.

In the twenty-third book of the *Iliad*, at the funeral games held for the burial of Patroclus, when Nestor is pointing out to his son Antilochus the course for the chariot race, the poet makes him say: 'Now will I tell thee a certain sign, and it shall not escape thee. A fathom's height above the ground standeth a withered stump, whether of oak or pine; it decayeth not in the rain, and two white stones on either side thereof are fixed at the joining of the track, and all round it is smooth driving ground. Whether it be a monument of some man dead long ago, or have been made their goal in the race by ancient men, this now is the mark fixed . . . yet beware of touching the stone, lest thou wound the horses and break the chariot.' Or it has been translated: 'On either side, where narrowest is the way, and all the course Around is smooth, rise two white stones, set there To mark the tomb of someone long since dead, Or form a goal for men in ages past.' The chariot race, therefore, at the burial of Patroclus, had by tradition, or in the imagination of the poet, a pair of dolmens for its turning post. Remark that: 'All round it is smooth driving ground.' These are downs or grasslands, not the golden corn. The chariots are drawn up side by side: 'And Achilles showed to them the turning post, far off in the smooth plain.' It is even possible that this pair of dolmens are still standing in the Trojan plain. But attention is only drawn to this incident in the great epic because it proves that, already, in the Homeric age, those bleaching bones were relics from a forgotten world. It is the oldest literary evidence as to the antiquity of such remains, coming, naturally enough, in poetry, for their mystery calls to the imagination. But fare-

Lyric Fantasy

well to the chariots and to the funeral games! The lark that sings is a thousand summers earlier in time. His wings, while they flutter, make the living moment. This is the real antiquity before it grew stilted, before the horsetail plume. And the lark has climbed higher while these words are read.

Their megaliths and our megaliths. And, while the lark climbs in the sky, we will walk between the shadows in their citadels of stones. The singularity of this open landscape is that the weather is in scale to it. If it rains, there is no shelter within miles. To-day, it is the torrid summer. May morning has burned into June. But any wind that blows shakes and buffets as though it were a wind from off the sea. The only cosmogony, the only world in little, is where the cicada sings; or while the lark is like a diamond point in the summer sky. Such is the eternal, age-old morning, but it is not to be known and recognized. They are no familiar shadows. This is no longer the green hill and the cuckoo wood. These are not the daughters of Albion who dance upon the hill, hand linked in hand. But we will walk up near to them. We must be as travellers who have come out of a desert; and for many months, or thirty centuries, they are the first human beings whom we have seen.

They move by the blue waters of the mountain pool in bright gowns, the yellow of lichen or of the saffron field, dyed, in fact, with weeds and with the seed pods of the flowers. Long dresses and long sleeves upon the bare hillside, some of them ribbed or pleated all their length, down to the sandal. Their black hair, twined and braided, blows before their faces. How slow they move! No one hurries. It is a morning in endless time, and there is no thought of change. Why go more fast! There are the flocks to follow. Time has no other measurement than the rising and the setting sun. It is before the hours were born.

The first thing noticed is their static slowness. They are

Lyric Fantasy

standing or sitting on the brown grass of the mountain side with the whole day to waste, and no other task than to wait upon the flocks and herds. In an hour they will but have wandered to another heap of rocks, and always and ever by the blue waters, moving in a rhythm round the barren shores. Races, who are born to this, have their own language, as it might be, of movement, as though each pose has meaning. They have brought their children with them. The little babes are naked; and the boys and girls are not to be known apart in their long dresses, except for something pastoral in the boys' long gowns in prophecy of a shepherd's smock. Some of the women are singing to their babes; but there are no old women, no crones or beldames. This first breath of a summer morning, thirty centuries ago, has nothing old but the worn rocks and the changing sky. Look, for a moment more, at their long bright gowns! For every movement is in composition, like the figures in a drawing. Those of them who wear pleated dresses seem the taller, and have the peculiar movements of persons in long gowns. For their dresses trail upon the brown grass but their tread is well-limbered, and they walk like Gypsies. It is that the straight edges of their pleats and folds have a line of light upon them which tallies exactly to the graining and shading of a golden pencil. In the pure air that golden outline glitters in its particles as though the scumbling of the lead motes were to be seen in it. But now these single groups or figures coalesce together into a composition of women and children which, in its simplicity, is but a summer morning by the mountain pool. And with no more than this reminiscence, which imposed itself, we come down from this lyric fantasy and are in the shadow of a single megalith, or standing stone.

Beneath it, some mares and foals are grazing. Its sister stone is near by, rising to three times the height, or more, of the unclipped manes and standing like a huge pillar, a giant

Standing Stones of Stenness

column with a forgotten meaning. But the jagged sides are smooth, and there is little flaking or chipping of the surface. So the megalith is a giant man, not shaped like one, but none the less a stone man, and except for the little babes, the first male human being of the morning. For the blue lake is but behind the shoulder of the hill. If we listened, we would catch their voices and the bleating of their flocks.¹

The scene is lonely and magnificent. All has the simplicity of early times. An eagle wheels with wide wing over the rolling land, and his shadow is the only shade out of the sky, soaring and sweeping with his iron pinions a mile above the lark. This is the air of the first wilderness. The earth has no taint except the droppings of the herds. Looking back on him, the stone man is an island pillar or a mountain; the sister stone is a megalithic goddess, a stone Venus of the caves and pits. Is it but the rubbing of the wind that has given her protuberance as though she were with child? She has but the rudiments of mortal shape, hips and thighs that are those of the unshod mare that panics, for no reason, and runs round upon the turf. That much of the woman; but the stone has no shoulders and no neck, nothing but the end or top of it which is her head. In their minds of magic the nubile or beautiful are not to be expressed. Her fertility and not her beauty are held sacred. This is the fiction underneath their yellow gowns. A rude stone pillar is symbol of Venus come to earth. The pair of megaliths are a man and woman; but they have not been carved at all, the wind and rain have shaped them as roughly as a rock or pebble worn into some semblance to some simple thing, some simple image. They are stone pillars left bare for superstition to create its legends from them. To this extent their idols could as well be bits of wood or stone,

¹ The Standing Stones of Stenness, on Pomona, the mainland of Orkney, are here described. There are many megaliths and stone circles in the vicinity, and the blue lochs are full of trout.

Landscapes between the Megaliths

or any curious object found on the glacis of the mountain, in a dark cavern, or upon the river bed, chance symbols for their fears, of no more import than the horse that panics at a piece of paper and throws its rider.

The landscapes between the standing stones are incredible in detail. They have the clearness of hallucination, one image being next to another as in a fevered dream, while their merging or coalescence is by contradiction, an affinity by opposites, as in a rhyming scheme in which the rhyme dictates the meaning, identity of sound being mated to utter dissimilarity and the poetry consisting in that clash of images. Thus, one standing stone, where there is nothing but the wind and sky, is a pillar of measurement by which to know the eagle's gyrations, how he banks with his wings, or drops like lead from the aether to the plain. Another can show nothing but the green world of the grasses, the whole of creation in the shadow of a hand. All at a white cliff's foot which is many miles in height.

There are stones that are nothing but their own bare selves, but are the tiger or the panther in their patternings. Or the lichen can be the constellations, the great circles of the stars, the fiery comet and parhelion, all the symbols of the heavens. Through a stone opening it is the world seen from underneath a horse's belly; or in the game played by children when they bend down and look between their legs. There are stone doors framing nothing, but of which the jambs and lintel, three monoliths, in their calcareous whiteness and their mosses, are as magnificent as a pair of snowy mountains guarding a strait of ocean and holding up the sky. Others of the stone pillars are as white as mushrooms spawned after a night of rain. In their candour they will last till evening and not be standing in three thousand years. And, like mushrooms, if you look closer, their fungus flesh is flecked with colours. They are stained with their own juices.

Mound Burial

The very shape of the stone circles is the way that mushrooms spring up in a morning. It is a strange contrast of the timeless stones and the epidemic of a night and day. Their difference is in the touch: not in the shape: not in their stature, if you lie down to the ground.

Such is the pattern of the megalithic plain. And it is necessary to take on its symbols in their proper import. The monoliths that have holes in the middle are emblems of fertility. All the ancient mysteries have their present meaning. The standing stones are not mere pillars that must be studied again and again for a fortuitous likeness. They are, indeed, pregnant. Under the mounds the dead Kings are feasting. All visual things have their catalogue of incident which attaches to them. If the skeletons of horses lie below, it is known to all that they are grazing in an endless plain, the Hippobotes, as it might be, of the ancients, that huge meadow by the Caspian where fifty thousand horses could pasture. Were it a ship burial, the long boats are launched with every warrior at his oar. Women, queens or princesses, are again in childbirth under the green hill. Have little dead children stayed like that; or grown to manhood? Who can tell? They are buried deep and none may look at them, till, in a thousand years, someone will dig into the mound for treasure. And what will he find? Dead bones, like other bones. He will take away their rings or necklaces, their golden swords or crowns. The dust will come down again. The grass will grow.

The stone circles are for miracles to happen. They are not to be approached in cold indifference. No one passes them but with ecstasy or terror, in their prime. It is here the voice of thunder is invoked. Sparks fall on the wet sheepskin, and a fire is kindled. The damp hayricks smoulder into flame. A grass bank burns for no reason. Such things are self-engendered; their action is from some force within themselves. It is not more of a miracle than a prayer for rain, and this is

Star Watchers

the more impressive if it be answered with a clap of thunder. That voice out of a clear sky is the magician-King's master-stroke. Perhaps it may only be achieved by so studying and habituating himself to the seasons that he can foretell a little in advance of them from the whisperings of instinct in him. This can only be when his senses are at their finest pitch, in harmony with external things and, probably, forgetful of, or outside himself. It is no more than a culmination of the curve of nature. We must think that the mysteries of moonlight and starlight were watched and attended by them all their lives. The bright comets were kings and magicians of the skies, sparkling vessels that fulfilled their courses and returned again. As to the fixed stars, these corresponded to the dynasties upon earth. By studying the wanderers who moved with their flocks and herds, and the glittering cities of the skies, it is possible to make prophecies and foretell events. There are the presages of birth and deaths; the lights of fruitful marriage; or barren fields with no influence from the stars.

Wars must not begin until the sheaves are golden. Dark waters, evil spaces, mean the troubled seas. There are the phases and complexions of the moon; her pearlshell paleness when she climbs in perfect roundness in an empty sky; the stormy heavens; her pallor in the frosts, or upon the snows; or the barley moon when her colour is that of a maiden who has bathed in the blue waters and keeps the summer on her skin. These far-off things are pointless and insignificant, a mere spectacle that plays before our eyes. The study of the heavens is, in fact, entirely futile; or it is the law of destiny and nothing is accident, all things are arranged.

This is hoar antiquity but it has not sprung up in a day. The age of caste has lasted for a thousand years. Or less. No one knows. But it has only been a golden age for those who wear the golden torque. The fate of lesser men and women is not written in the stars; or it is to be found there, but it is

Embalming the Dead

too small to see. They are hinds or peons; not linked to the heavens with those golden chains.

The next step in thinking is that the great ones do not die. There was a time when they were not born, and the day will come when they have gone away. They are still living; but in this other state they cannot be imagined but with their flesh and bones. It is for this reason they must be buried. It assures them immortality, for they continue just the same. The nation that learnt embalming was the earliest and greatest race of men. It had been practised for two thousand years when the stone circles spread upon the plain, and echoes of this miracle they could not do had come to them. Probably, because its inventors so believed in it, in the form that they had really Kings and dynasties who did not die. This, again, was a master-stroke of the magician-Kings. It was the privilege of royal blood. Ordinary mortals, or those who could not pay for it, did not aspire to this. Their imitation of this secret was as clumsy as their barbarian temples. It consisted in burial in an earthen mound, or underneath a stone. Round them they assembled their belongings upon earth, and took with them their wives, their horses, and their servants. The death of a great King was the signal for a holocaust. It was as though the hills were opened and a concourse of persons rushed into the tomb to die.

Their world of life and death is ordered, and it will not alter. This may have taken many hundred years to form. The golden age, for those with privilege is the present. But what of the past? Do they think of it as a young world; or is the limestone grey with age? Who has been here before them? The morning is so sweet and pure to us. We heard the lark sing and felt the breath of summer. Do they ever feel it is so old that it must end? Or is every morning virginal, and every evening like a maiden dead? We know their nights are haunted, but by familiar shapes. Do they tell their children

City of the Aurignacians

stories of the limestone caverns? What of the unburied bones of animals and men? The echoes of old battles and the horn blown in the holly wood? Such legends are long in dying.

The haunting of the stone circles should be by a huge hand, or a gigantic helm. It cannot, and it must not be, by husbandmen or peasants. For the magnitude of these forgotten kings or caciques, whose works will last for ever, lies partly in the images that they call to mind. A ghost in golden armour sleeps in every mound. The landscape of the monoliths can crawl with figures, and in their inflexible strength and might the supposition of the race that built them might demand a creation that knew no expression of the features but the mask, the armoured visor, of the tribes of insects. The head of an insect cannot laugh or weep. It can die in agonies and not grow pale, or alter in its features. This is because the mask or visor is emotionless. The only expression is a stare of cruelty and incomprehension. With these forgotten Kings, if their masklike features show no emotion, the trend is to gravity and in order to instil terror. They are emotionless from their great stature, that is an eminence of authority and wisdom as much as it is their actual height of feet and inches. Also, they rule by magic.

But this is not all. Far off, in the high plain, there is a city of the Aurignacians, a name that was coined for them by modern science, and we know not what they called themselves, but then, as now, a place of hedgebanks and green dykes. A palustrian village, half-marsh, half-flowering meadow, that for a few weeks is a field of white narcissus with the wind of heaven blowing from its perianths, and later, is nothing but a few blue flag flowers in a stagnant swamp. Three thousand years ago all would know that it had been a village; or a settlement of huts big enough to have been a town. It had, still, its streets and alleys, its ramparts and the foundations of its houses. There were stone hearths

City of the Aurignacians

with the marks of fire upon them. One day there must have been the last man and woman to be living in that city. Fire was lit for the last time. They slept for another night and were gone by morning. Why was it deserted? Had it dwindled by slow degrees; or did they leave because of pestilence; because it was threatened; or had become unholy? No one knew. There were no stories. They belonged to another race. Their name and language were forgotten; and not even that, for this land was empty when the men of stone arrived. This was its mystery. That it was a vast emporium of horses and of wide-horned cattle. The horses were of early type, like the wild onager, of different profile, with another head and body from horses as we know them. And their cattle were half-auroch, white or fallow, and gigantic, who had grazed under the great oak trees in an endless forest. The settlement is twenty to thirty feet deep in bones of cattle, as the archaeologists have found, uncovering more than was known three thousand years ago. It must have been a town for ten centuries or more to accumulate this refuse. The bones were just taken to the outskirts and thrown away, until walls of bones and bastions were formed that stood higher than the houses.

Here the cock crowed in the ancient morning. What would one not give to see but the weeds that grew upon those hills of offal! And, daring from that, to come down among the houses. To have flown in an aeroplane, written poetry, and lived that many thousand years ago! Though but for a few moments, time enough to see whether the history of the world is written in the countenance; if men come from the angels or the anthropoids, and in certainty of the latter, whether the brute and the criminal were yet banished from them, what the end of the world will be from its brute beginnings. Most of all we would look into the faces of their children, for in them the future and the end are given. There

The Works of Giant Hands

were legends, we may be certain, of the long-haired mammoth and of fiery craters in the circle of the mountains, for this whole land is volcanic and has burned out long ago.

Then, who is young except the lamb or foal? The further back in history the higher the antiquity. Did not the world grow more youthful when men left their caves and took up the pastoral life? A little child is younger than the new-born babe with its embryonic likeness and closed eyes of death. Those with whom we would have wandered, long, long ago, in those earthen ruins are less innocent than their predecessors. We shall find them stained with blood shed by their own instinct which is working inwards and has put the seed of superstition in their hearts. We could prefer their fore-runners, not their ancestors, in the danger haunted forests when there were crimes of love or jealousy, but no noise of wars. The priest and the magician have come to rule the world. Since then, the world is neither older nor younger than in their day, save where we have blackened it with smoke, where the sprawling slums lie, or the earth is salt with sweat from labour unrewarded. It is a pretence, then, an illusion, that this air smells sweeter, that fate might have worked differently, that the age of gold was ever changeling for a golden age. And yet, who would not feel youth in these open winds from anywhere, for the remote distance is unknown and so much is mystery.

Stone monuments and earthen mounds are works of a solemn and a heavy hand. It is, perhaps, of good augury for the future of the human race that their earliest monuments should be so serious, so little trivial in character, however blood-stained or fearful their destined purposes. They were the first great works of man, and nothing in history has yet destroyed them. They are dumb evidence pointing to the past and to the present. Of the future they say nothing. Not being works of art, they are not prophetic: time or fashion can

The Works of Giant Hands.

never come back to them again. Their character, thus, is more of a warning than a message of things that are to come. A warning, and a tremendous and deliberate attempt to be remembered, whatever happened, long after such things as names would be forgotten. This is high antiquity and it should not be fettered with a name. It is more than a mere coffin, a box lid with words cut upon it. Much prouder to stay for ever without a label, with no clue to the everlasting mystery. We should be thankful for this big, this giant physique that makes sign to us out of the most ancient past. There is nothing mean or ignoble in it. If it be a warning, it is to be serious and large. No one can pass by and not be struck with wonder and astonishment. If only we could be certain that the last of men will leave behind them as mighty bones as these and not a mere litter of machinery, the incinerated engine, the twisted chassis, the melted wings of Icarus, and no more than that.

For the megaliths are huge in the dramatical or epic sense. They are the first footsteps and they show no faltering. It is a proud ancestry to be descended from such giants. These stones and mounds are mute witnesses of man. They are dumb evidence; but their sign or language is of the giants. They must be the work of giant hands, of Gog and Magog; of ogre or hero of the ancient land, Herculean, Cyclopaean labours, differing in the legends of the nodding plains. For time has slept since then. A lull of oblivion has come down upon them. Nothing is remembered. There are only fictions to account for them. Their huge bulk has had to be explained. Whatever is so ancient is solemn and epical and must be imputed to a gigant past, fitted by stature for fighting with the gods. The race that built them have been destroyed, and have vanished utterly. It is impossible that they should have dwindled and died down. The seal of destruction is on their tumbling stones that topple and lean over, that lie on one

The Works of Giant Hands

another, or are fallen to earth. It has been a war of giants, of mortals and immortals, and the last have won.

Yet their only enemy has been time, old time. The race who succeeded to this ancient people had not the strength or numbers to upset those stones. They sank, of themselves, in subsidence of the smooth driving ground, in an earth tremor, a shuddering of the plain, or in gradual desuetude while moss and lichen grew upon the monoliths and dressed them for old age. From one winter in a thousand years the stones might crack or split, the huge lintel slip from its great pillars and sag for some centuries, then fall to where it lies. Time has brought the green plain to the cliff foot of the dolmens where they climb like islands from a rolling sea. There is no mark of footsteps, no trampling of the plain. These old bones are as remote from humanity as the grinning skeleton, once lover or mistress, but compound, now, of chalk and lime in mere rudiment of the human being. Who would know that these were altars, sun clocks to time the sacrifice, nunneries of the virgins, circles to hold magic in their precincts, ancient mysteries that had more ritual than the set religions? For this is the opening of the treasure chamber. It is the birth of symbol and metaphor, of legend and artifice, the ascent of the spirit from but animal intelligence into the arts and virtues. Such were the dreams and visions of mankind when they came to build the stone monuments and raise the earthen mounds. The youth and beauty of the world were theirs.

But the megalithic landscape has to be known in its discrepancies. The ferment of ideas had come, and in the intoxication of their new inventions they worked in frenzy at a useless purpose. There appears to have been a regular megalithic fashion in building that spread all over the mainland of Europe, the basin of the Mediterranean, parts of Asia, and even Further India. This produced the megalithic age, as complete a period as any other. It may have been a craze

The Works of Giant Hands

inspired by stories of the Egyptian temples, probably the first great buildings ever erected. But these are clumsy or barbaric imitations; not true buildings, but stone circles. The mere discovery, however, that they could use their hands was encouragement enough. They are stones built one upon another but enclosing no more than the small cell of the first great pyramid. The raisers of the megaliths were content, even, that one huge stone should stand for a wall built piece by piece. Their rough, titan strength was proved in this, for the labour called for was out of all proportion to the piecemeal method. Not so the skill and energy in quarrying and conveying the great monoliths that we may meet, later, upon the grassy roads. Their passion for building was as a toy they did not understand. It was the fetish they worshipped, imputing to its rudimentary shape those functions and purposes that savages credit to their idols, or children to their toys and games.

In the manner of first love, the most enduring of all experiences and inventions is so often at initiation. The Pyramids, which are the first great works of architecture and of science, are not less marvellous than they were five thousand years ago. The stone circle at Avebury, the green hill of Silbury, Stonehenge or Karnac, taking only those remains that lie near to hand, are of this category. They are made more mysterious by their absence of all ornament. This would suggest that their raisers, for we cannot call them builders, disdained all detail in the mightiness of their titan hands; that despite their show of energy in the levering and transport of these heavy stones they were lacking in the most primitive artistic sense; or that the immense age of these erections had suffered all such vestiges to disappear in the course of time until they hardly resemble the work of human beings and could nearly be the result of earthquake or of natural causes. And, in fact, no exact estimate within a thousand years can

Mystery of Stonehenge

be given for their age. Every opinion contradicts another. Their precise purpose, even, is not known; whether they are temples or burial grounds. In the instance of Stonehenge alone, in the words of an authority: 'It has been attributed to the Phœnicians, the Belgæ, the Druids, the Saxons, and the Danes. It has been called a temple of the sun, and of serpent worship, a shrine of Buddha, a planetarium, a gigantic gallows on which defeated British leaders were solemnly hung in honour of Woden, a Gilgal where the national army met and leaders were buried, and a calendar in stone for the measurement of the solar year.' In addition to which, no less an architect than Inigo Jones sought to prove in the archaeological ignorance of his age that it was the work of the Romans; Fergusson, with the solid *naïveté* of the mid-Victorians, and their industry, argued that it was British of the post-Roman period; while another authority explained it as a gigantic cannibal hearth upon which the bodies of prisoners were burned as a sacrifice in great wicker baskets. Out of all these conjectures, many of them absurd, it is only safe to associate Stonehenge with the barrows or tumuli which surround it in hundreds upon the plain, and which can be dated from the internal evidence of coins and other objects found buried in them as being not later in date than the third century B.C. But this is not to say that it may not be much earlier. Stonehenge will not have been raised to be in midst of the burial grounds. These will have gathered round it in the course of ages. It may date, therefore, from not later than the first millennium B.C., in the full epoch of the megalithic temples, and Karnac will have been its near contemporary in time. The dating of the earlier monoliths at Avebury, of the artificial hill of Silbury, of the still older Maiden Castle, may never be exact within a thousand years. All of them, and Stonehenge, even, are mystery and conjecture, mammoth or monstrous shapes that still obtrude

Dynasty of the Giants or Titans

their bare bones, have the hint of glacial or volcanic action, the touch of fire or ice upon them, are hardly human, and to even the least imaginative of minds must call up a vision of gigantic hands, of a race born to a different canon, where the true sense of primitive is big or great, and antiquity intends great virtues and great tragedies.

But, now, quivering and shaking in the heat, the megalithic landscape sweeps out into infinity and displays its cities. The illusion given is of a valley, or a kingdom, set with towns. At first sight they are as walls or towers in the sky, cloud cities, or those dolomites that sun and wind and rain have worn down into a fiction of architecture more fanciful than any truth. Not that they are peaks or pinnacles, or the ordinary fantasmagoria of a city in the distance. There are no houses. They have no windows, no myriad eyes that, as in human beings, are the light or intelligence of the whole body. Instead, this is the imitation of giant hands and their game is, not a city, but a sacred grove of stone. The only shelter is the tomb or mound. They are summer palaces, in so far as weather goes. Their day is with the buttercup and daisy. They are external, with no interior, like a set scene built in stone, a scene or fiction of great temples, so much so that the priests from their prototypes, could they be carried here, would recognize the principles but find themselves in a huge travesty, a clumsy joke of Titans, a temple built with childlike faith, but with no knowledge of construction. And yet they have the building sense, and like a huge barbarian, have the touch and energy but no execution. So that it is wrong to impute to them no technical knowledge, because, in a sense, the fury of their inspiration can dispense with that and proceeds to its effects by instinct, and not from skill.

The conception is barbarian and lavish, for the wealth of the plains is to spend. It is the work of a nation, not the labour of a few. But it bears upon it, none the less, the sign

Dynasty of the Giants or Titans

of a single mind and the personality of a caste, a ruling family, someone whose orders are not to be contradicted. He set the whole nation to the hewing and drawing of the monoliths. In the result, it is their labour and his character, to the extent that it is almost a physical impression, although this would be identical in any other megalithic instance and it should be, in legend, a family of brothers answering to the description of Giants or Titans of classical mythology. That such fables had their basis in the stone monuments of that early age is certain, but it is not borne out in the stature of their skeletons. It is, in fact, no more than poetry or legend. What is indisputable is the giant force, the work of giants even in the knowledge of their physical remains. Their kings or caciques are paralleled wherever the dolmen or the megalith throw their shadows. In this way the dynasty of Giants or Titans is assured, for it rules at once, and at the same time, in a hundred places. This is the proving of those ancient legends. In the case of such primitive structures the differences are not many. It is the Cyclopaean style, rude vernacular of the shepherd kings, a tread more heavy than the shaking of the corn. When it comes to that the world will be no longer bare stone and earthen plain. The huge era will be over. The ripe honeycomb have succeeded to the golden fleece.

Not a word of war this summer day. Men have their spears and daggers, but it is no more than the sword that goes with powdered hair. The trumpet note is a haunting from other and more wicked times, for the warlike age is intermediate. It is a phase in every history, and generally the last; the beginning, that is to say, of a new order and, in its turn, the ruin of the old. The trumpets will blow again. This age of the shepherds will not last for ever. It is not always summer. There is the cold, when the wolves come down and prey upon the lambs, in the sheepskin days of winter. High

Dark Haired Orcadians

up in the pastures, by the mountain tarn, women will no more be walking in their yellow gowns.

But we met them, a few moments gone. We need summer for this vision of a cyclopæan world. The shadow of a temple lengthens along the grassen emptiness. It is living, every hour of all the night and day, waxing and waning even when it is sunless or there are no moon or stars. So it is a living thing, with a living heart and eyes, a body that must be fed with praises, that must have fire to warm it, and a diet of flesh and blood. It takes its toll, or tribute, of the living. As though it were a child's doll, life is imputed to it and it must be fed and treated as a living being. Will it not die! Has it not been dead three thousand years or more! But this toy of light and darkness has its shadows still. It was made for this: as a clock is set to keep the time. So many things have no names. The flowers or the mountains are not noticed unless their mass is conspicuous, or they mimic some other, more familiar shape. A hill must be a human profile or a woman's breasts; golden kingcup or snapdragon must ever have been named for that. The mountain pool would be a round pebble, or a human eye. Even families had not their proper names. They had no alphabet, and learnt their poetry by heart. But our theme is not the enquiry, or reconstruction of their time. Our purpose is the living moment. And not alone in this one valley but through the whole world of high antiquity. There is the tale in all ears of other cyclopæan works, down to the stormy ocean on the edges of the world, as far North as the Orcades, in mythical Pomona, a Northern and, in this contingency, a Western world, for it prefers the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, but no one knows the whole extent of it. The dark haired Orcadians would have heard of nothing further than the Hebrides, although they would not be aliens on the ironbound coasts of Northern Spain. But we prefer for our purposes the inland plain. It has been brought down from

The Shepherd Kings

those angry seas to fields of narcissus. The shepherd must spend all day in the open and not hear the howling of the wind. No golden age can nod its flowers in the cold.

And yet those bleak shores are a necessity. The standing stones would lose their drama if violets grew against the monoliths. They must rise from a promontory between two lochs, within sound of the sea; or in the ancient plain, near a green pyramid. But it could, as well, be cyclopaean India; or the megalith in lands of the parrot or the lion. It does not matter; nor make difference. The antique virtues are the same. One megalithic temple is like another. The shepherd Kingdoms are not more varied than their flocks and herds. But the landscape is typical where, from a distance, the stone circles could be temples or white towns. The giant, but empty symbols of their power take on the visual and imaginative importance that they have for themselves. For they are token buildings. In order to believe in them it is necessary to have seen none other. The King is a magician and an immortal; and, thirty centuries later, such titles must be allowed to him. In all their rudeness, his stone circles have lasted throughout time.

The world is a multitude, a cosmogony of shepherd Kings. No one has yet travelled far enough to count them down the endless summer. Upon such a day as this you would hear a hundred tongues spoken under the cloudless sky, travelling, not as we do who leave the clouds behind us, but journeying the whole morning with that one white fleece in sight, morning after morning, round a shoulder of the hills, down into another plain. The roads are where the flocks are driven, and no one knows who made them; or whether they worked by instinct or design, from one pasture to another, to the sweet waters, or to the sacred groves of stones. There had been long years of this when every generation had been young, when every day was endless and the whole world was shade of the

Druid

green hedges and bright faces of the eglantine. The whole day went by like this. No one came past but little children, or an old, old woman. To be so old as that; and so long ago. But is it not more sad to have been young on that one morning, for it counts for little more than that in the immensity of time! Not the age of the little children, but of the pair of lovers on this morning of the dog rose. What other flowers were there? The foxglove and the hemlock. And it was a bank of violets. This was the hireling shepherd. His lambs wandered by themselves: but the dog rose fades quickly. It is dead by evening.

In all this landscape of the megaliths there has been a description of the women, but no mention of the men. Their priests or magicians were, of course, the Druids, a name to which some forbearance has attached itself owing to its too familiar implications so that it is better to go back in all simplicity to the first meaning of the name, which is derived from the Greek word *δρυς*, an oak, because the woods and solitary retreats were the places of their residence. The novice of the Druids occupied as many as fifteen or twenty years, during which time they loaded their memories with names and numbers and the rites of magic.¹ Young Druids, therefore, are not to be met with. In the recesses of the oak forests there are neophytes or acolytes, but magic is the prerogative of the old or middle-aged. The typical Druid, in more direct descent than we might imagine, was the Father Christmas of the holly tree, another figure that has lost its force of meaning. We have to dismiss his red-cheeked geni-

¹ Perhaps some echo of these Druidic schools, or at least their system, is to be noted in the school of pipers at Boreraig, on the shore of Loch Dunvegan, in the Isle of Skye. This was maintained in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries by the MacCrimmons, who held their land of the Macleod by the tenure of piping. The course lasted seven years, and the pipers had to learn by heart nearly seven hundred tunes. Cf. *Scotland for Everyman*, by H. A. Piehler (J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1934), pp. 167, 168.

Druid

ality and call up in his place forms of terror and foreboding. In the first place they look alike as brothers of one family. Their beards and the long locks of their hair are so alike as to be a convention, a formal wig, or something which could be taken off to reveal the true person underneath it. This may come, in part, from the habit of wearing no covering upon their heads except the hood or cowl of their robes, in the rain and fogs and in the snowy winter. Their hair has the majesty and disorder of the Kings of the Gypsies; in point of which they are tall men who walk with a long staff, noiselessly, for there are no pavements and none but earthen floors. Their gowns are white or blue. It is necessary to think of them in forests of the character of a chace or park, not mingling their shade but each tree an individual, many of them well antlered from old age, and, in their seasons, motionless in the drowsy summer, half-hidden in the fog, or like a great galleon creaking and straining in the Northern gales. Huge trees in width and girth, but too broad of stature to be giants in height, and stretching over such great tracts of land, with here and there, a waterpond, or a rise or falling of the ground leading on to more, that it is easy to be lost among them. Tacitus describes an island, it may have been Anglesey or the Isle of Man, that was the last refuge of the Druids, but, long before that time, it is obvious that it was the safety, and not alone the solitude, of the forests that invited them.

However this may be, there are certain other things that had to do with the Druids of which the traces, incredible as it may seem, are not yet vanished. It has been suggested, for one instance, that they had a secret language, a jargon of inverted words with others that were pure invention but had their special meaning. Long years spent in oral training could well include such fantasies in the curriculum, and it may be that part of the noviciate was spent at this. They were the

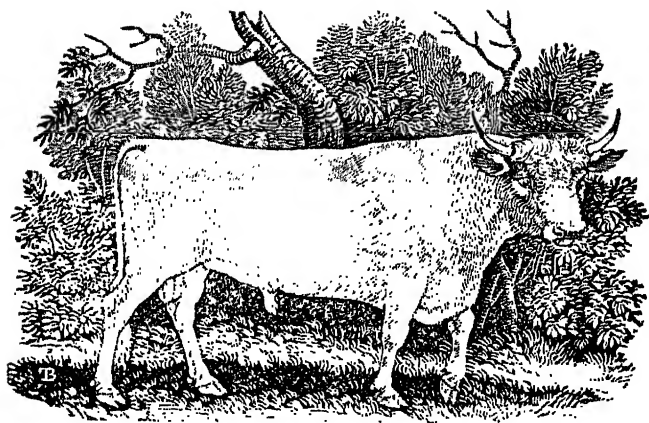
Shelta

learned men, and besides medicine and divination had other crafts which were peculiar to them. During the time of their gradual extinction these trades continued, in a civil sense, while their other functions lapsed. This jargon, then, was kept alive in those professions as a means of retaining the particular means of livelihood in their hands and was imparted to each new generation of their apprentices. Such may well have been the origin of the secret languages of Ireland. In the course of time the Culdee monks, who, also, were builders and artificers, declined in their turn and this jargon of builders and masons, which had been enriched by them with words of Latin origin and monkish fancy, came down in the world until, after many centuries, it was only spoken or understood in a few phrases used by the itinerant workmen in a corner or two of Southern Ireland. But it had survived, also, among the peddlers and tinkers. This was the secret tongue of which a word or two was heard spoken by John Leland, the great Romanichol and successor in that sense to George Borrow, from the lips of an old Irish tinker as he sat with him by the side of the Bath Road on an evening in 1876. The old tinker told Leland that his mother had known more of this language, and it might have been supposed that these were its last vestiges and that all other memory of it was dead. But this was not the case. It was left to the late Dr. John Sampson to pursue *Shelta*, as this secret tongue or jargon is called, into its unlikely lair among the slums of Liverpool, spending some months there, disguised as a tramp or tinker, living with the other tinkers, mostly Irishmen, in their lodging houses and drinking in their dens, until he gained their confidence and heard them speak among themselves. During this time he was often in danger, for his companions might have revenged themselves upon him for his deception of them. But he was able, in the end, to publish his vocabulary of *Shelta* and one of the more extraordinary romances of our

The Chillingham Bull

time was, thus, accomplished. For it has, at least, this distant and remote Druidic origin and is not the mere bastard of the thieves' kitchens and the stews. There were other secret languages that were no more than rhyming slang or cant of the thieves and criminal classes in the slums of Dublin or London during the obscure miseries of the eighteenth century, but this is not of those.¹ Its descent is from wild places, the green lane and the dingle, near, perhaps, to a hoar stone, where the yew tree drops its berries. There, the few words were spoken over the flames and above the cauldron before, in the fulness of time, even this liberty had taken to the damp cellar. While it was still on the lanes, following on the tinker's cart or barrow, it was close to its origin. And, over the chase and through the oak forests we can follow it, down the trackless hills, to that island mentioned in the Roman annals where thirty thousand Druids made their last resistance and were slain. From there, the remnant fled across the Irish ocean. But this is not their only relic. The white 'park cattle' may be descended from their time. Of these, but one herd remains, which has been split up among several owners and is in danger of extinction. It may not number, in all, more than forty or fifty head of cattle, and there are hardly any bulls among them. But they are the ancient British cattle, soon to be rare as the Lithuanian auroch, a remnant of individuals who must soon die out. Their coats are milk white, with hoofs and ears of jetty black, never domesticated, nor employed for milch kine, but owing their survival to having been driven, after centuries, into a remote part of the North where they stayed until it was enclosed for park land. Their horns are white, with black tips bent upwards; and some of the bulls have

¹ One summer day, in the year 1876, returning from a long walk in the beautiful country which lies around Bath, when on the road near the town, I met with a man who had evidently grown up from childhood into middle age as a beggar and a tramp' . . . *The Gypsies*, by John Leland, 1882 edition, p. 354.



THE CHILLINGHAM BULL
from the woodcut by Thomas Bewick (1753-1828)

The Chillingham Bull

a coarse upright mane, which is not seen at a little distance. They are still untamed and, in the philosophy of wild animals, the old bull or patriarch is driven out to die. This white herd are the Druidic cattle, once grazing in their thousands under the oak tree's shade.¹

The white bull comes slowly, in the evening light, out of the acorn bower. His white cows are with him and the milk white heifers. We can see their soft eyes and the dampness of their muzzles. It is a slow passing of the milk white herd, and their jetty points are as tails of ermine for breeding and ornament upon their milky skins. The heifers could be wearing crowns of gold and golden collars. This peace of the patriarch, of the milken cacique, advances with him in the pastoral land. But the white bull is not the master. Out of the beehive hut, a house of reeds, comes a tall man in a white robe. He opens a latchet in the fence of wattles and, led by the bull, the kine and the young calves pass within. Soon, the milken dynasty will kneel and then lie down upon the earth. But the moon, in her first quarter, climbs out of an oak of acorns, and in the dying light, shines in her own ocean. Her beam touches upon the white robe and the hut of reeds. In a few moments she is clear of the branches and something cold or reptilian gleams upon the ground. It is dew upon the dolmen.

¹ The original herd of white park cattle is in the possession of Lord Tankerville, at Chillingham Castle, Northumberland.

III

Primitive Scenes and Festivals

It is never quite dark.
Morning is on your eyelids and in your nostrils before the dawn.

In this moment the Queen shows in the opening of her tent. She stands perfectly still so that, perhaps, she has not moved and stood there in the darkness. An idol, or an image. Entirely without movement, and in some curious way expressionless.

Her face is gold masked, by a thin plate of beaten gold. It could be the mask of the moon goddess, round and bland like the barley moon, but with a woman's features, and at the same time a funerary mask, an effigy to be laid upon the face, the body, itself, reclining against the wall of the tomb, and lying upon one sheet of fine gold extending from head to foot, and covered over with another. So will she be in death. We cannot see her face. Only her eyes, through the eyeslits in her mask.

But, more remarkable is her golden crown. Into this her mask fits so that her forehead is not seen. A golden band, or circlet, of pale yellow gold. But its rim supports a row of ornaments that form the crown: stags and goats in a barbaric idiom, and between the figures flowering plants that must be

Crown of Novocherkask

the bindweed from their shape, part convolvulus, part clinging vine, their leaves deep-veined, their climbing tendrils coiled into themselves. Why the bindweed? Because it comes up in a summer night and chokes the sunflower? Who can tell? The goats have great coiled horns, thick as the sea conch, and curving backwards, goats of the distance, or of Asia; of the Pamirs, the steppe, even of the tundra. As for the golden stags, they could be reindeer. Their antlers are mossed, as they would rub the velvet from them. Not giants: but small, as reindeer always are, and as if bathed in a golden light, a winter sun. There is a golden bird, too, disproportionately small, and by comparison, no larger than a golden oriole. Below, upon the circlet, there are figures of eagles with open wings; their feathered trousers, like the trousers of the Scythian, plainly seen.¹

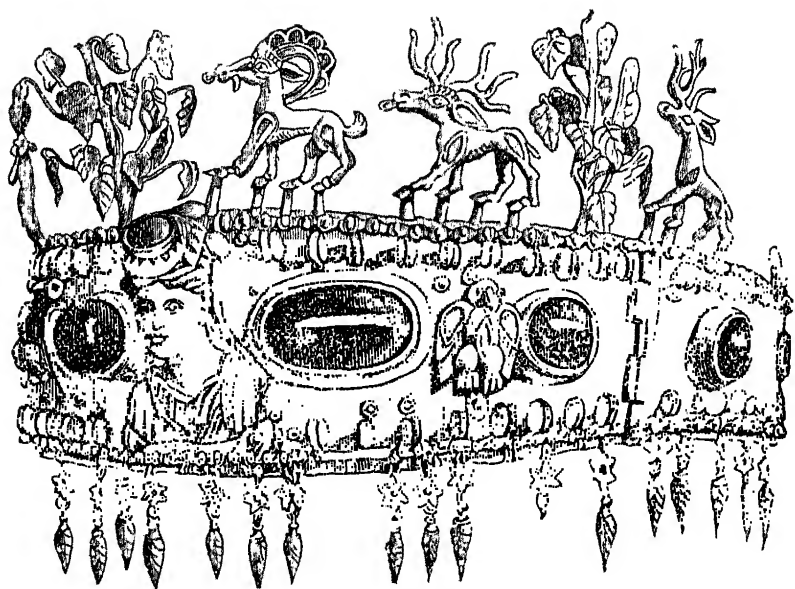
The effect of this barbaric crown is as though it branched, of itself, into antlers, or into stalks of coral, in a golden metaphor. It is a crown of horns and antlers of which the points are, in fact, those of the reindeer contrasting with the goats' horns and the climbing bindweed. A crown modelled in intention from the heads of goats and deer. The winter Queen upon the night of summer solstice. In the opening of the tent her golden mask looks to where the sun will rise. But as the eyes of a dead woman, expressionless. And her sleeves and dress are golden, too: as stiff as though lying between sheets of gold. Her hands we do not see. They are quite hidden.

¹ These pages have been inspired by the gold and silver treasure in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. They are among the Crimean, Scythian and Siberian collections; some of Greek workmanship, some of barbarian execution. The crown of Novocherkask, capital of the Cossacks of the Don, was found about seventy miles from the mouth of that river. The golden perfume boxes are of the same origin. The silver vase of Nicopol, one of the treasures of the Hermitage, was excavated from the tumulus or kourgan of Tchertomlyk, near the third cataract of the Dnieper, some fifteen miles from Nicopol. It is of Greek origin; the other objects that have inspired these pages are Siberian.

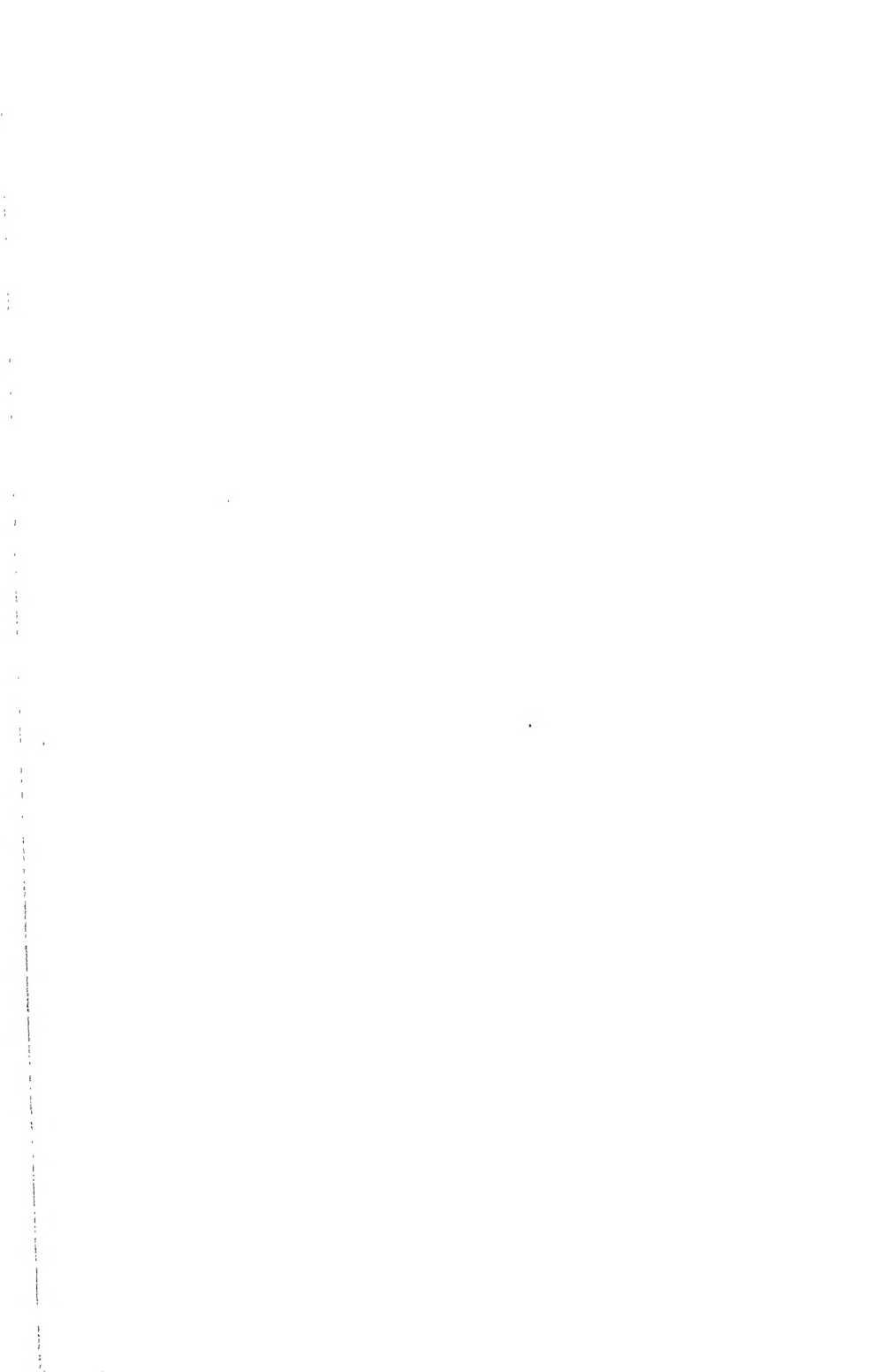
Golden Perfume Boxes

Inside the tent of felt there are her treasures, that will be buried with her. Chief of these are her golden combs, and gold boxes for perfumes or pomanders. Some shaped like a flask: and others like ointment boxes: but all strung with little golden chains, being small enough to be carried on her person, so that they hang from her belt or can be swung like censers. Their whole surface is chased with ornament of barbaric origin. The neck of one gold bottle, for it is flagon shaped, has a design of animals which must be the wild ass or onager; while the body of this golden box shows, in high relief, an elk being eaten by an eagle. Another depicts a row of elks lying down, head to tail, for we have time to examine all of them, and take them up into our hands. They are abstract patterns which give richness to these golden boxes long before their curious script, for it has the effect of that, can be read into these elks or onagers of the long and empty North. What is important is their ornament, and the Siberian gold. The land of elks and reindeer. But an art of beauty which has perished, of special gold, for it is pure and massive, the colour of marrow, or of a green apple. Meantime, that golden figure in the doorway does not move at all. She does not even need to hold her mask in place.

Her King, whom we will see here and now, is bearded and wears a golden helmet shaped like a skull cap, and long hair flowing over his shoulders. The helmet is an imitation of a skull cap of felt, conical or egg shaped, of leaf and flower pattern, the grounds cut out so that it is in golden open work. Under this the real felt cap is worn, and the golden fillet with which his hair is bound. His ordinary headdress, on another day, would be a pointed hood, a long shirt belted at the waist, and trousers which are tucked into his boots of soft leather, dressed yellow. But the peculiarity of his appearance comes from that golden helm, or skull cap, and from the manner in which he is spangled, all over, with little golden scales.



GOLDEN CROWN OF NOVOCHERKASK



A King in Golden Fish Scales

These are sewn on, in hundreds, on his tunic and his trousers. Not in such number on his shirt; but down the legs they are arranged in rows like a golden braid, an armour of golden scales, the *vestes auratae* or *sigillatae* of the ancients, being little golden disks, stamped, individually, with designs of birds or animals, but in the distance having an effect, as we have said, of golden fish scales. His whole costume of long shirt or tunic and trousers tucked into his boots is that of a race who have to fight with wind and cold. His bow and quiver hang from his belt, the quiver with its sheaf of arrows being shaped like an instrument of music which could be hung upon a tree. We must accustom our ears to the rattle of his wooden bow case, as to the noise of his spangled trousers and the soft leather of his boots.

The golden objects, for so we must term their human wearers, both King and Queen, are not absolutely of that hue. It is not gold but electrum, a natural alloy of the metal with one-fifth part of silver, its colour being paler and more luminous than gold, not the colour of an orange but of a crab apple. From his helm or pilos—such was the classical name for its prototype in felt—down to his feet, this golden warrior glitters or coruscates like a being out of the sky, and with a trembling light, for his golden fish scales catch and retain it in their myriad spangles. His image, therefore, is never still. It sparkles in a shower of gold, or like a golden fountain, in detail that is too little for the eyes to follow, but its fiery particles descend, as it were, out of some inner fire that never quenches but is inextinguishable. It is a curious symbol to see this golden being in the doorway of his tent; and at a little distance from him the Queen masked and crowned with fronds like a golden idol in the opening of her tent. Neither looks toward the other. Their identity is formal. He comes from his tent; and she from her woman's tent. They must not let their shadows touch, or fall together.

Silver Vase of Nicopol

Of whom, or what, does he remind us? Of an eagle walking forward in our direction, with the stride of the eagle. For an eagle, in its turn, has the walk of a man in trousers. Listen! and, in the distance, you may hear the shepherd's pipe made from an eagle's wing. This King could be of that race whose chiefs wore armour of sliced horses' hooves, sewn on leather, and dipped in liquid gold. His trousers, even, are in emblem of the barbarian. That peculiar walk, which we compared to the stride of an eagle, is that of a horseman coming forward to catch up his horse's bridle and leap upon its back. The herd of milk white mares is grazing near. Inside his tent, if we would see it, is other treasure that will be buried with him in his tomb.

There is a silver amphora. It is silver, not golden, in direct connection with the milk white mares. The whole of this amphora has a relief ornament of foliage and flowers, and its tap or spout is a winged horse's head, a wild horse of the steppes with mouth open as in the act of neighing. Round the shoulder of the amphora is a frieze of men, shown in the processes of training and breaking in their horses, which wander at liberty, and are next depicted lassoed, with their heads brought to the ground: hobbled, with ropes tied to their forelegs: or already bridled and saddled. The tap of this vase has a fine sieve of silver and a stopper of that metal, attached by little silver chains. In fact, the purpose of this silver amphora is to hold koumiss, a drink of fermented mares' milk, cooled with snow.

This is the land of mares' milk. From that herd, in particular, of milk white mares. Let us not be exact. It could be Siberian by the golden ornaments, of greenish gold. We are beyond Borysthene, at present, in the summer pastures, so far out that it is beyond India. Destruction has, ever and always, come out of this emptiness. It is the land of the whirlwind. The world shakes, now, with the wind out of the



TWO GOLDEN PERFUME BOXES
FROM NOVOCHERKASK

Land of Mare's Milk

steppes. It is not yet finished. It may blow to the ends of the world, and back again. The place of ferment, or of fomentation. It comes by the sword, or works within the blood; but destruction is the same, whether by theory, or by fire and pillage.

The plain of Tartary: or region of Tartarus, hidden in a cloud of darkness three times more gloomy than the obscurest night. A pall of fog out of which the lightnings play. But the dreadful darkness is synonym for distance. The journey of many months compares, in simile, to an impenetrable night. At the end of it, the image is reversed as in a mirror. This is the horror or consternation of that Stygian dark. From here the whirlwinds and the lightnings strike. But, as we say, the darkness is a fiction.

That silver amphora gives us the measure of their dissipation; but its shape, though so far from the Euxine, was due to artificers who had enjoyed the vine. They had sailed in seas which knew the dolphin, where the huge sturgeon swam in the depths, but the further shore was barbarian and lost in darkness. So immense is this territory, and vast their wanderings, that the nomads from beyond the Caspian are Asiatic or Siberian: it can but loosely be said that they are Scythian, but their wealth in flocks and herds and in the precious metals has brought them craftsmen who have lived for so long upon the steppes that they have changed the Pheidian canon for a style formed from the life around them. Side by side with these are works, entirely barbarian in inspiration and execution, of Siberian magnificence, like that antlered crown, from a land of elks and mammoths, with all the mystery of distance, and ruled, as we shall know, by the magic of the Shaman.

Near by, there is another herd of piebald mares. Their magpie markings are appropriate to that image of silver combined with milk and snow. They are chosen from all the

The Herd of Mares

nation's horses, a piebald seraglio. The milking of their herds of mares is all the husbandry of this nomad race; and fermenting the koumiss is their harvest home. All are alike as brothers of one family and dressed the same, with fewer spangles; their faces, bearded and moustachio'd; with long hair; and wearing pointed caps that are hoods to keep out the wind. They live and move in this multitude of horses. Here, in the summer pastures, one hundred white mares might be a drift of snow lying, unmelted, upon the plain. There is no horizon: unless that distant line of cloud could be a range of mountains.

And, with no other background, a whole poetry consists in no more than the movements of their milk white bodies; the lovely group of long neck and flowing mane, where the mare is grazing and her foal feeds from her; the mares that stand close together, while the one licks the forelock of the other, and their great dark eyes apprehend all dangers; those that graze peacefully, and move forward, as though dreaming of green fields; and the milk white Amazons that stand sentry to give the alarm and lead the herd to safety. At the step of a stranger they gallop down the wind; but to the voice that is familiar they come up close, or but lifting their heads for a moment crop the grass in contentment and display no fear. We would see them in their mating, which is a sham battle when the white stallion brings war into the herd of virgins, with flying hooves and furious neighing. Then, the white horses prance with their forelegs in the air and there is much covering of the mares who, by turns, are docile and submit. It is like a vision of a horse in another element to see him reared on his hindlegs, twice the height of any man, and intoxicated with the air he breathes, so that steam comes from his nostrils and there is foam upon his lips. In his frenzy he has lifted himself into another species; and an entire visual mythology could be built up, in painting and in sculpture,



GOLD HELMET FROM THE TOMB OF THE SEVEN BROTHERS

Nomad Towns

from the horse upon his hindlegs, always in rage or terror, and a danger to man in his return to his own element.

The herd of milch mares travels with the King: and his wealth is so great in horses, in their tens of thousands, that the treasure of gold and silver found in the Scythian tomb mounds or in the Siberian tumuli need be no mystery. Also, in the course of time, the ruling tribe kept to their nomadic habits from predisposition, and in order to conserve themselves, while their subject races worked the riverbeds for precious metals and were suffered or compelled to lead the settled lives of serfs. The treasures that were buried with them had no more lordly setting than a tent of felt, so that their wealth was immediately conspicuous in that space no bigger than a tomb. The picture, indeed, is not exaggerated of the King and Queen, at dawn, in the opening of their tents; the one, masked in gold, sheeted as it were, as though laid out for death, but standing; and the other, glittering with a myriad golden fish scales, so that he shimmered as he moved.

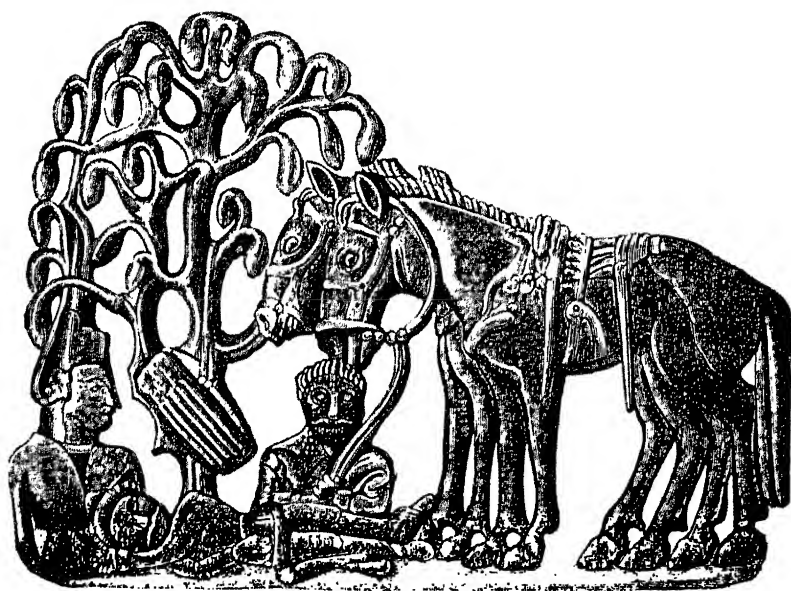
Soon, riding on towards the sunset, in an hallucination born of its strangeness, we get the smoke of fires. From a swelling in the plain that could be the back of a huge breaker in the ocean, itself sweeping forward mile after mile into the distance, we must, suddenly, rein in and halt. The whole Tartarean town lies just below. An encampment of ten thousand tents: the nomad capital, moved forward every few mornings across the summer plain. They pitched camp this evening: or but yesterday. And may be gone to-morrow. Within a month's journey, perhaps, we could not say where we shall find them. It is the same tents, same persons, a thousand miles or more, one way or the other. And so it is in time. So unchanging are their habits and their customs that a matter of centuries makes no difference. The silver amphora was, or was not, among their treasures. It was found buried

Ritual Cannibalism

in a tomb; and in a continuity of a thousand years it may happen that we have advanced it to where it could not be. And it does not matter much. All we need is a primitive race, who must be pagan. The ghost of the silver amphora was already with them. It is the only anachronism in their tents of felt.

Wherever it be, this early age is always the same in one respect, that it is in association with vessels or utensils of the golden metal. A moral, could be made from this, which would be a comment on the golden age. Such was the secret of the tomb mounds. From the Black Sea to Lake Baikal their nomad dwellings darkened the underworld, while the golden or the silver bowl gleamed in the eternal night. We are not come, yet, to the stepped pyramid. But it is the summer solstice anywhere, for there is identity among these demi-cultures. Not an age of abbeys or of castles, but of ceremonies in connection with the seasons. The ulterior world was made visible in the constellations, which must affect the births and deaths of human life. Such knowledge was universal to these states of being, to the extent that their whole total in different continents could be considered as one culture, spread out through time. In all lands their chosen virgins lived only for this consummation, whether by fire, on the cold altar stone, or in the sacred pool.

But the great drama had not yet begun to play. That will come later, with the hecatomb, with Death and the Maiden, and the sacrifice of those they loved. Blood letting was not practised with the weak and bloodless. It was a superfluity, a spilling of their wealth. Its purpose was propitiation. The morbid tendencies of this religious rite are too luxurious to be found among mere savages. It pertains to a particular state and condition of civilization, though the ignorant cannibal may be a person of more ceremony and subtlety than the poor of our own slums. But our theme is neither the



GOLDEN PLAQUE WITH GROUP OF MEN AND HORSES

Golden Cups of Vaphio

Maori nor the Papuan who needed flesh to eat; our concern is with ceremonial or ritual sacrifice, in a condition of civilization which in some respects may have approached our Middle Ages. Our scenes of human sacrifice have, as climax, a ritual tasting of the meat. As a sacrament; or in order to obtain possession of the dead man's powers. With mere savages it is the final humiliation of the enemy; but such is human sacrifice in its most primitive aspect. We are among the megaliths, or the tomb mounds of the plain. At the death of a great man his wives and retainers must follow him into the shades. And there was that other sort. There were the virgins and the captives. It was to be a holocaust of victims. The only truth of such ceremonies is to resume them all.

We invite you, therefore, to come out upon the hills. It does not matter where. And come down, slowly, through the flowers. It is the summer morning; and there is the whole world to choose from. Not the Stone Age: nor yet the Age of Bronze. How to reconcile the stone circle and the teocalli? The silver vase of Nicopol and the golden cups of Vaphio?¹ The first is equine and the last are taurine. In the treasure of Nicopol we have the nomads of the steppes in the background of their barbarian rites. Are they Aryan or Mongol? They produced great conquerors: In an earlier age they were pagan; the tomb mounds hold the skeletons of horses and the skeletons of men. So confused were their lives with horses that there must be some word for this. They were not pastoral. The drama of this is not for its idyllic scenes, not for its herds of milk white mares, but for the white nightmare, looking in and neighing in the ragged moonlight at the tent opening, the ghost of a horse, famished and dying, in terror at something it has seen. There is this, and much more, in the silver vase of Nicopol.

¹ The golden cups of Vaphio, now in the National Museum at Athens, among the collections of the Mycenaean age, were discovered at Vaphio, in Thessaly, in 1889. Their date is, probably, about 1000 B.C.

The Tauromachia

But the golden cups of Vaphio are tauromachic. It is the tauromachia. They are in the Minoan or Mycenaean style: in the legend of the minotaur. The bull was a symbol and, almost, a deity. Stories of the bull pit, at Knossos, and of its labyrinth of corridors had come to them. Of the virgins who played the bull and leapt with a long pole from between its horns. Of their flounced dresses, like a crinoline, but light as a ballet skirt; their puffed sleeves and high headdress of a priestess, or a serpent goddess. The girl acrobats or toreadors, which would be their name because they did not kill the bull, had, in fact, more than a resemblance to the flounced skirts, the high combs and mantillas of Seville, skirts made in Gypsy or Flamenco fashion, of flaring colours, or white for the darkest skin. Thirty centuries of tauromachia have not altered that. When we think of the Cretan minotaur we must see the trembling of the flounces.

But the golden cups of Vaphio are more pastoral or bucolic. They depict the bulls of Thessaly. The men, with their wasp waists and long hair, catch the bulls in nets and rope them. Not a crowd of men, but just one or two, who master the whole herd. But it is impossible not to see in this more than the mere pastoral meaning. Otherwise, it would be no more important than the milking of the kine. These are pastoral warriors. They have the muscles of an athlete. The taming of the strong bulls has a moral or religious point to it. In their eyes the bull was a brute god, the image or simulacrum of brute force or war, who made the fields fertile with his blood. A ritual, and almost, a rite of sacrifice was involved in this. How wonderful, this summer morning, to come down from the hills among the oak trees and the sycamores? To smell the smoke of wood fires, and hear the chop chopping of an axe of bronze! To wait for a human shadow, and in the thin waist of that, know the men of Agamemnon, for they are of the same race as the Mycenaeans! Men of the Lion

Golden Cups of Vaphio

Gate; but, in reality, and this is more beautiful as an image, it is a Gate of Lionesses. What bloodshed and tragedy stained the very walls! It is the dawn of history: but a blood-red dawn. And, yet, how short a time ago! It may have been a million years since the first man trod the plain of Argos. What are three thousand years in comparison with this! Not more than a hundred generations. This high antiquity is but a little thing: but the first page is soaked in blood.

What we would establish is the pastoral or bucolic reign. The golden cups of Vaphio belonged to shepherd Kings, or cowherd Kings. Agamemnon was no more than that. But this Arcadian plenty must be removed from fictions and high-sounding names. No one knows who was buried with the golden bowls. And if we could walk down into the cyclopaean town, and enquire of them, it would mean nothing, a genealogy of names, less in number than the generations of their cattle. To ourselves, of no moment: but all important in their time. Perhaps it is a relief, for once, to have a history without names. In no history will you get the feel of a summer morning in the Age of Bronze; the music of the cow bells, the noise of a bronze axe upon a cypress tree. The men have worn their metal belts from childhood, and are wasp-waisted because of that. They have long fair hair, like many Albanians, broad shoulders, and dark or swarthy skins. Their women wear the pleated dress, or chiton, and their hair in long ringlets which hang in front upon their shoulders. Their great dark eyes are Orient-lidded, and vulturine, like birds of prey; as Oriental as the Gate of Lionesses, a borrowed theme from Asia Minor, which, then, had lions in its brakes and stony valleys. It would be a truism to say of all men who are buried with their treasures, or who build the cyclopaean walls, that they are not far removed from the ritual of the hecatomb. This is the Megalithic Age, still. The huge stones are in evidence of that. And could we search in

Harvest Songs

the shadows, in their shadow consciousness, we would find the proofs of it.

There were other cowherd Kings, and kingdoms of the trident. The King of the silver fleeces reigned in the meadows; and, at a day's journey, a swineherd King ruled the acorn forest. There were goatherd Kings, among the leaping waterfalls; and nomad Kings who moved from plain to mountain. There were Kings, even, of the charcoal burners. A few hundred, a few score of persons, had to have a ruler over them. There would have been—perhaps there were—Kings of the lepers. We have seen the King of the milch mares. Earth had no end: and there were ever tales of Kings. Into the distance: upon the islands: and beyond the sea. There were Kings of the golden cornfield, and under them, begs or caciques, call them what you will, parcelled out among the maize or barley; rulers of green rye, or the dwarfish oats, who start and lead the singing, one song for sunrise when dew is on the scythe, in that magic hour, maybe, when sun and moon both burn together in a sundered sky; another for midday which finds the harvesters in a golden lane, a segment cut into the golden honeycomb, wherein they eat their meal and sleep; and a song for the late afternoon, when their wrists are swollen, until the moon comes up above the cornstooks, and they go home in the cool evening.

The song is taken up from one hill to another. They reap to the brow of the hill and are answered from the valley. Or it comes through the wood where nightingales will be singing. The harvest songs are so old that they have already lost their meaning. Words of a haunted language only spoken when the golden god lies dying. Songs in praise of whom? Ah! if only we could know that, what a different world would open to us! We would talk to the old crones of their youth of reaping, when they rose in the summer night to carry up the breakfast into the harvest, and their men reaped already, and there

Rain Festival

was never such reaping since, or mornings so cloudless and such a magic noon, as magical as midnight, for if you closed your eyes the god moved in the branches. The old and wise, then, would listen to the silence, after, and tell you what it meant. There was a voice of water. What did that say! The birds were oracles: the wind was a young person, youth or girl, to lull one with fair presence and to bring sweet dreams. Everything had meaning when one was young oneself.

There were certain inducements pointing to one way. A view of the whole early world, in respect of its culture, and without regard to place or time, must take into account as an excuse and for a palliation that part of the Inca Dominions in which the rainy season was punctual and to be expected after two hundred and sixty eight days, a period which nearly exactly corresponds with that of human gestation. If it was delayed, or if it never came—and this could happen—then the deduction was clear that human lives should be sacrificed. And, above all, a virgin. To whom? It must be, in some form or other, to the sun god who scatters the clouds and melts them into rain. Probably this example of the reasons for human sacrifice is the most direct instigation that could be discovered. They can hardly be blamed for it. Their brains had begun to think and their eyes to look around, and this was what they found. It multiplies easily into extravagance, but it is logical in its beginnings. Such was a rain festival, in its simplicity. What shadows, then, nodded upon the corn-stooks; or moved in the minotaur among his herd! For the bull is a bull-man: made in the image of a male human being. He is the human image hidden in a huge brute force. In all the animal creation you may look for the human likeness and proclaim a god. The bearded goat had become a god; walking on two legs and with a pair of horny hands. He lived on leaves and berries; but, as well, would steal the grapes. The horse became the centaur. Even the unconscious animalism

Local Deities

of the beast, his oblivion to what lay round him, was in proof of his divine nature. He knew everything; or saw nothing.

It is before the Nine Muses trod the flowering earth. The halls of Olympus were all empty still. Instead, there were hedgerow gods; and the shadows of rough stones. A dominion of a wood of yew trees; while household gods could be mere pebbles, or little bits of wood, fetiches or amulets for the closed palm of the hand. Local deities, whose fame went no further than the orbit of the husbandman among his fields. Gods of a single vineyard; or even sacred trees. A sacred thorn tree strung with rags, as though it was a beggar of the rutless roads, for they had no waggons. The haywain did not leave ghosts of straw upon the eglantine. There was no more than a rumour of the chariots of war. Where the bright iris played above the waterfall, the deity dwelt in that, and fled like a ghost until another day. There were lake spirits in the waters, and many pools were bottomless and held the serpent. Gods, too, for no reason in the empty fields, where it was always lonely and you must look behind you. In a corner of the thicket where no one went, which had an evil reputation. The blackened hearthstone of a ruined house. The dark shade of the ilex, summer or winter. Fungus gods, spawned after a night of rain, where the snake slept in the fallen tree trunk; or, high up, on the living tree. Blights that came, for no reason, upon the green branches. Shapes, too, in the air. Clouds that were like profiles, which stayed for a moment, and dissolved. Flying shadows which raced along the land. Noises out of nowhere. A voice heard in a hundred years. A sighing, and no more than that; upon a summer day.

Such are gods of this hemisphere; the offspring of our seasons. Lesser divinities, demi-gods, confined to sticks and stones. Their authority falls no further than the length of their own shadows, hallowed or enchanted ground, not wider

Legend of the Golden Torque

than the dew ponds or the mushroom ring. Most of them anthropomorphic, with some affinity to man. Objects that surprised or startled, of which the appearance was inexplicable, save as a warning. Black stones; or roots that could be monstrous births. A thunderbolt; or a bright stone brought up from the lake. On occasion, something their own hands had fashioned, more often unfinished, when they became aghast at what their skill had done, at what was forming in the wood or stone, a spirit come up out of earth, or shaping from the air. As for the major gods, their golden body is the harvest. Who could doubt this? When a whole cornfield bows down in the wind: when the very scarecrow could become a god to them. Or not know a god of the apple trees, or of the meadows? Gods of this temperate or northern clime, before we descend down to the torrid deities, leaving the gold mask and the megalith. All the extent of this, from the dolmen to the tumulus, has shepherd Kings, and but few warriors. We say the Muses were not born yet. This is not true. There are the marks of their sandals, but the Muses were not named. The arts were in simple things, in spinning or dyeing, or in the potter's clay. In the brooch or fibula; or in the golden pin. In a shepherd's carving and the curve of his high crook. All or nearly all of this, has perished long ago. There are but few relics and, of these, few, indeed, that compare with the cups of Vaphio or Nicopol, or call to the imagination from so long ago. Listen, then, to the history of the golden torque.¹

This is the tale. It is a golden rod bent round to form a belt. In the early years of the last century it was bought by the land agent of a great property in the North of England from a farmer who was using it as a latch to tie his gate. Every time the gate was opened it must be lifted up, and then put back, until we may think that it gleamed, as gold does, from the

¹ The golden torque is at Eaton Hall, Chester, in the collection of the Duke of Westminster. Its history is, substantially, as I have given it.

The Gypsy Tinker

press of many hands. The farmer had it, long before, from a Gypsy. This was in a part of Flintshire; but no more of its history is known. It was never discovered where the Gypsy found it; nor, even, is it known if efforts were made to trace him, though this is probable, for other golden regalia may have come into his hands. The story, indeed, is enough in itself. For this is a Druid's girdle, lost through the ages and come down to the Gypsies. It can have belonged to no ordinary Druid, and, in turn, its discovery should have made the Welsh vagrant into a Gypsy King.

Where can he have found it? Under a hedge, as if it had been thrown away? But, in two thousand years, it would have sunk some inches deep into the soil. No tree is old enough for it to be caught among the branches. Could it have glistened in the brook when they went down to fetch up water? It is a ghost story, told of the white smocks, to think of the golden torque turned up by the furrow. They rejected it for a piece of old iron, but the Gypsy tinker looted it in the late evening, while the smoke of his bonfire hung upon the air. Or it may have been found by digging. Deep down in the dingle, where the Gypsy went to gather sticks, and in the twilight set a trap for rabbits and in the early morning saw something gleaming in the burrow. Perhaps the very rabbit warren was in a tumulus, and they had tunnelled in the years until the wooden coffin dropped to bits. It is not probable that it was found with other treasure. Or the Gypsy would have known its value and would not have parted with it to the farmer. As a tinker, the Gypsy will have searched the old refuse heaps, and perhaps some affinity, as of iron to iron, brought the shining serpent to the surface after the long winter of its sleep. The golden torque lay, with other scrap iron, and old stones and broken bricks. It is even possible the Gypsy did not know its history, or how it came to be among his tinker's stock, having been bought in a sack of old odds and ends from a tramp

The Gypsy Tinker

who went his way and had not been met again. The tinker must have set some store by it, or, long before, it would have been melted down to mend the pots and pans. One of his daughters may have worn it as a belt upon her gown; for it has two ends which nearly meet, and is so light and pliable that it turns back in the hands.

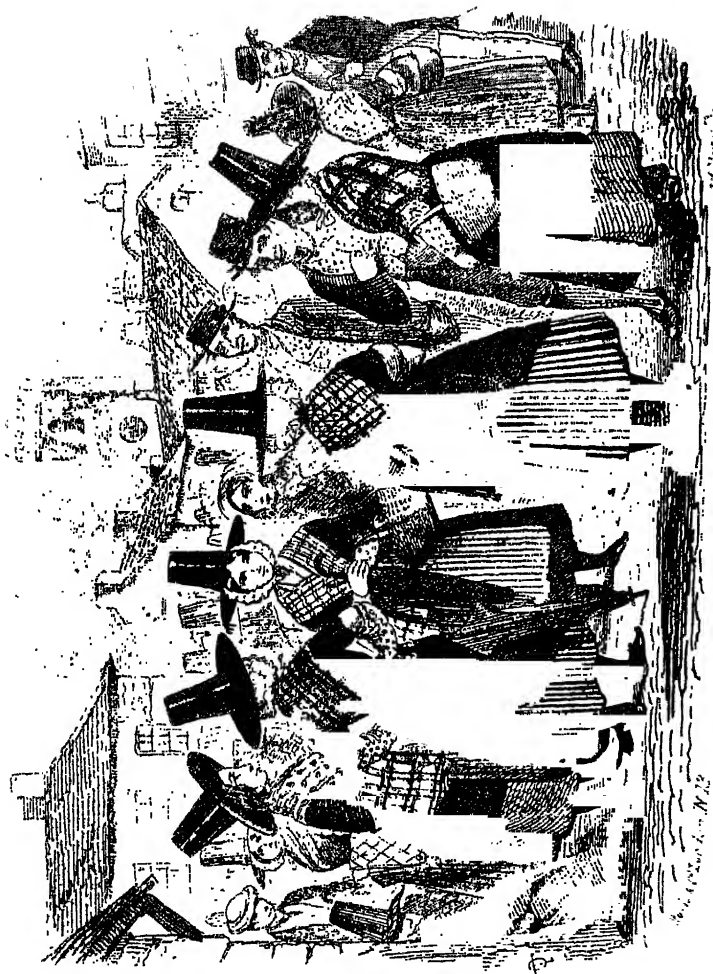
There can be so much conjecture. This seems probable, that it was buried, not on purpose, but by the action of the ages, meaning that, in the first place, it was thrown away or hidden. Near to it, there may have been the old bones of a skeleton. All the circumstances, which are so shadowy, suggest a flight. Did the Welsh tinker know of this, and think that murder had been done? If so, he would have had no inkling of its antiquity. A gold belt or waistband was not in the fashion of his time. But their Gypsy legends spoke of that, for they had come out of another land. It must, at least, have been long ago, for it was the belt of a man and not a woman's girdle. From the time when men wore gowns: not the white smocks of the English farmers, but a gown that was a robe. It was not thus that the top-hatted Welsh women rode pillion to market; that they stood for hiring fair, in their red cloaks, with an umbrella in one hand and a basket on their arm; not thus were the fishwives; nor the women at their stall of geese, all in black steeple hats worn above the wimple. This was no woman's girdle. But in the mists of history, as it occurred to him, the past was all one past. This came down from antiquity; and, though it were a deed of blood, the blame was long forgotten. Perhaps it descended, quickly, to be the plaything of his children. Then came a day when the farmer asked to have his gatepost mended; and nothing else was so convenient. There was no other clasp to keep the gate together. And the child cried because its toy was taken from it.

The belt, though, may have had no value and no meaning. It is certain that the Gypsy did not know that it was made

Names of Gypsy Women

of gold. How to suspect this in a hoop of metal, black with age, found in a muddy ditch, with no more than a grooving, a slight chiselling along its length, and a gleam, as of brass, here and there where it is rubbed! So it is probable he did not even know it was a belt, until, upon an evening, when they had halted, one of the women took both ends of it, and opened them apart. It was old, and had once been something, that was all. And, perhaps, she put it round her waist and, liking the feel of it, let it stay until it was time to throw the last sticks upon the fire and lie down to sleep under the glittering stars. We wonder what can have been her name? Athalaia, Begonia, Canairis, Concubina, Coralina, Damaris, Darklis, Esmeralda, Fuchsia, Gerania, Kadilia, Kunsaletti, Mirella, Narcissa, Prunella, Rosaina, Saiforella, Smaranda, Theodosia, Urania, Virginta? All names of Gypsy women and, every one, the evocation of a tawny person, till we could fill night and day with pictures of her in that belt of gold. For we come back to that hoop or band of metal. It passed from the Gypsy to the farmer and was recognized. Not at once. It was dark, still, and stained with verdigris, as it had been when the Gypsy woman wore it round her waist. Its hour had not come yet. And it was long familiar to the man who bought it. He must have wondered what that metal hoop could be. Until, one evening, the smocked farmer gave it into his hand. It was a golden torque.

That it belonged to a Druid, or great chieftain, cannot be in doubt. But the evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of the Druid. The belt is sacerdotal: that much is implicit in it. Had it been the belt of a warrior it would have been formed to hold his sword; while a King's belt would be jewelled. It is not feminine, for it is too plain in shape. It can only, therefore, be a Druid's belt; his golden girdle worn above his gown. It is made of Irish gold, and is ascribed by expert opinion to between the sixth and third centuries, B.C.



WELSH HIRING FAIR

Irish Gold

How did it come to Wales? There is, in the Mabinogion, the story of a country legend concerning a King who was buried in golden armour underneath a hill. When the tumulus was opened, about the time the golden torque was found, there lay the skeleton in shreds of a golden breastplate, and with other golden objects round him, so that the tale was true. It is the longest instance of folk memory that could be desired. The presence, then, of such things was not unknown in Wales. There was Welsh gold, as there was Irish gold, and indeed, in greater quantity. But the torque is Irish and was found in Wales. If the tawdry adventures of its discovery are so romantic, we would know it, also, in its prime. How did it come to this remote part of the country, since it is only reasonable to imagine that its recovery took place not far away from the spot where it was found! But the whole secret is in distance and inaccessibility. We are in the world that was nearly uninhabited; and, at that, the Druids chose the solitudes. But we would seek their company, and ensue it.

It begins at a river near the cobnut trees. Particles of gold are in the river sand, and in lazy manner they are washed or sieved. Gold is an ornament: not yet a lodestone. After many months there is a heaped handful of the golden grain. And this is hidden in each cabin near the horded cobnuts. For the soil is scarcely tilled. They feed on the river salmon, and on the shellfish that crawl upon the rocks. Upon wild fruits and berries, and on watercress. The peasants are not country men, for they lack the country arts. They live haphazard, and are often starving. Yet the green meadows have not changed. It is two thousand years ago, but all would know this land. And, presently, the King's men come round to take away the gold. Which King? There are so many in this divided isle. Therefore, we need not be particular for it could be true of many places all at once. But the gold belongs to a King, the ruler of many septs, and it is carried off in saddlebags. Round

The Hill of Tara

the shores of many loughs in which, already, there are sacred islands. Here the arbutus grows. Its twisted boles and gnarled stems cover an islet to the water's edge. But its red fruits or strawberries come in the autumn. Or it can be—and we prefer it—less luxuriant and rainy. Not in the fern kingdom, where it steams ; where it is very wet, very warm, and very shady.

The snakeless meadows are a mass of stones. It is so slow to wind among them, with the mountains ever in view and falsely near in the soft Atlantic light. Close by there is the bog. Every stone cabin is an oratory, though the saints are not yet born. But the cabins stand alone. There are no villages. At night, it is necessary to sleep upon an earthen floor among the pigs and cattle. And to ride, all day, and come to nothing but the nut tree and the elder. Great flocks of pigeons feed upon the mast under the beech trees ; there are snipe, thin-legged and long-beaked, in the shallows ; speckled woodcock ; and wild duck, with a purpose and a leader, flying in arrow shape and settling on the water. Also, for an enchantment, for a faery skiff or coracle floating by the reeds, a pair of swans, first one and then another, by the bulrushes. If it has been stormy, the sea birds come inland. That dark shape may be a cormorant fishing the sweet waters.

Upon the evening of the second day you smell the turf fires and come into a town, close to a salmon weir, under a hanging hill. The King's palace is upon the summit ; but, for palace, we mean an assembly of wooden buildings, burnt down in every generation, or more often, and consisting of shrines to the pagan gods and huge banqueting halls. Also, open spaces where poets and historians pitched their tents ; where the astrologers camped and the harpists sang their songs. Here, at a little forge, for it was like a blacksmith's shed, the gold was taken out and weighed. Jewels and golden ornaments were made, and among them, the golden torque was beaten in the white hot fire and took on its shape. We

Elk Hounds

see it, now, finished, and shining as though new. But not yet in use: lying in the King's store among his treasures.

At the time of the hunter's moon there are great preparations. Upon the day before, the King sat in audience wearing a crimson cloak, holding two spears with golden sockets in his hands. That night there was a banquet for a hundred guests. Harpists played, and horns of hydromel were passed round. All night long he dreamed of hunting. Before dawn, they came in a great procession down the hill, riding the small shaggy ponies that, in our imagination, should draw a tinker's cart and be found grazing in the lane for a first warning of a camp fire in the coppice. But we accompany this hunting party because of the untainted air we breathe. A mile away we are in the solitude, upon an early morning two thousand years ago, and looking back we can see the huge earth-works and painted roofs, but no traces of the town. The hill and the palace stand up into the heavens, as though earth had no other inhabitants than Kings and beggars. But poets, who are historians, have come with their secretaries, since neither poet nor musician have learnt to read or write. In fact, their secretaries are their wise men, for it is a science not an art. There will be music at night. It is to-morrow that the hunting will begin.

The quarry is *cervus giganteus*, the great elk of Ireland. There are many couples, in gold collars, led two by two, of the huge elk hounds, one huntsman to a pair of them, as heavy in bone and sinew as a small donkey, fed on raw meat, and kept in a house to themselves within the earthen ramparts upon the hill. Bred specially for the pursuit, and most prized when they are blue in colour, but this is an approximation, for we would call them dun, off-blue, or tawny brown. Probably, they are only blue when there is snow upon the ground; or in the bright colours after rain. The gigantic deer were, already, dying out, and only the remnant of what

Picts or the 'Little People'

they once had been. What a morning, this was, of legends and old tales!

There were dwarfish inhabitants who came up out of burrows or pit chambers, Picts or the 'painted people', of whom the Kings or Queens, who ruled a few families, were often more diminutive than their subjects, of true 'faery' or dwarf blood, whether by inbreeding or because such was their aboriginal type. Prognathous, with something of the ape, or circus dwarf, black haired, with beetling brows, but dwelling in a proportion or canon of their own, in underground chambers closed at the entrance with a flat slab of stone. Painted in various dyes, according to their rules of magic, not of the Milesian or Gaelic race, but earlier in provenance and driven, now, into the distance, towards the shores of Thule. Skilled in making baskets of the flags and reeds, but living elusively, hidden in their own language, and having no contact, if that was possible, with their conquerors. They were even lazier than the Milesians, and never tilled the soil, but lived by hunting. If you went down into their houses you would find nothing but fishes' heads and the bones of deer and rabbits. The Gaels are so much taller; and they came here in mystery, perhaps by way of Spain. Not the Celtiberians, who were short and dark, of Celtic type, though actually pre-Celtic and, it is probable, pre-Aryan. These Irish, for so we should call the Gaels, are so diverse in type; some fair haired; others, dark with fair skins and blue eyes, like the Gallegos of Northern Spain; and, some, the red haired wild Irishman, gabbling in Erse, impetuous and fiery, being in all probability the local form to which this blood has given birth. But, all, Iberian and not Teutonic, with nothing Norse in them. Picts: Celtiberians: and Melanesians or the Gaels: in all of them their affinity is to Spain. They have kinship with its soil and mountains, in some mysterious way, but only because we do not know their journeyings, or how



THE QUEEN OF TORY
*from a photograph lent by the Earl of Rosse
see note on the last page of the text*

Picts, and their Dwarf Herds

they crossed the ocean. The Celtiberians are more in connection with Wales than Ireland, and they were conquered by the Goidels and the Brythons. Indeed, Brythonic is ancestor to the Welsh, the Cornish and the Breton languages; while from Goidelic are descended the Erse of Ireland, the Gaelic of the Highlands, and the Manx tongue of the Isle of Man. In fact, Goidelic and Brythonic are linguistic, not ethnological terms; both are stems from the same root. It is difficult to make sense from such confusion. Let us say that, in Ireland, there were Picts, who were aboriginal; and Melanesians or Irish who may have come from Spain. Among them, and intermediate in their period of invasion, a certain number of Iberian settlers.

But we continue with the Picts, who are scurrying in and out of apertures in the roofs of their underground dwellings. Probably, in their whole history, no more than a hundred or so of this race were ever seen together. They were as few in number as the Lapps, whom, indeed, they resembled in some ways, in their pointed hoods and dresses made of skins. In their addiction, too, to magic; for they had, in incipience, the rites of the Shaman. But the Lapps, who could be a distant branch of the same stock, have dwindled northward to the extremities, and are but a reindeer race. The Picts, too, were herdsmen; and it is probable they had their own breeds of diminutive cattle, and dwarf sheep and ponies. The black Kerry cattle are of this type, and may have an ancestry as distant as that to account for them. Other instances are the Shetland ponies, and the breeds of small sheep which are peculiar to the Hebrides.¹ These latter owe the fineness of their wool to the damp climate of the islands, either rain or spray, and to their sparse feeding among the rocks and stones. It is, even, this quasi-starving condition which gives them that particular quality, due to the absence or excess of

¹ And sheep dogs, or Shetland collies.

Picts, and their Dwarf Herds

certain factors in their nutriment. The dwarfing or nanization of the island sheep and ponies is, of course, not deliberate but the result of natural processes which were at work, as well, among their owners, helped by inbreeding, and from the fact that they were already, by nature, of a dwarfish type. The Picts, at one time, inhabited the Hebrides. The present Hebrideans, who are of large boned Norse descent, have not degenerated in this manner, although a parallel could be established in the case of their kinsmen who were cut off in the Norse settlements of Eastern Greenland and became small and puny, until they perished to a man, so that it is possible that travellers early in the sixteenth century, who found two human bodies lying outside a hut upon an island off the coast, may have come upon the recent corpses of the very last survivors from this appalling isolation, there having been no contact between these colonies and the outside world for close upon two hundred years, since early in the thirteenth century. Recent archaeological discoveries in Western Greenland have resulted in the unearthing of these small bodies, given Christian burial close to their primitive churches, and their peculiarities have been the subject of scientific and medical discussion. But the Picts, as we have stated, were dwarfish anyway. From their long occupation of the Hebrides there remain, as evidence, the typical subterranean or Pictish dwellings; while, perhaps, the crofters' cottages, the original 'black houses', more especially, still to be seen in Lewis, have not only been necessitated by circumstances and by local material, but are, even, descendants of the stone houses of the Picts. The reason why the Picts were so few in number was that their population was kept down within small limits by the working of these laws of diet or privation.

If the Picts can be confirmed in their herds of dwarf animals, and credited to most of the peninsulas and islands of Celtic Britain, then the proving of many legends and much

Picts, or the 'Little People'

folklore will have been achieved. They had been driven by their conquerors into the waste places, but still retained their family or tribal organization, their 'family' Kings, for they were hardly more than that, and their distinctive way of life. They had, almost, some of the qualities of invisibility, owing to the speed with which they could vanish, as it were, into the ground ; while this, together with their small stature, and we may think, a corresponding or proportionate smallness in their cattle, or their sheep and ponies, caused them to be looked upon as magical or inhuman. This belief they fostered in their own defence, for it was allied, as well, to their own religion of magic and superstition. This was their protection against their enemies. Thus, the two races lived together, yet apart, never intermarrying, and looking upon one another with abhorrence. But, of the two, the Picts will have prided themselves upon their wickedness. They were, for ever, casting spells and encompassing their ambitions with the aid of magic. In landscapes where nothing alters much along the ages, upon bleak moorlands, on the haunted heath, in the forest of oak trees, on the open downs, upon islands in the bogs, or in the lakes, it is obvious that the unconscious memory must survive in tales told to children. They are not dead yet, as every countryman will know. It is more easy to see them there, in imagination, than living under the cellars of our towns, if only because they were forced by circumstances into what must always be the lonely places.

What is remarkable in them is the ugliness of their children. They do really appear to have been conceived in evil ; in contrast to the lovely children of the Irish, more beautiful than in our day, before the soft diet of the potato spoilt their teeth. The old, too, are deformed and monstrous. This is no demesne of lawns and parrot waters. It is miles from anywhere. The peat is dug out of the bog. The plover cries, mournfully, overhead : perhaps the black raven flies out of a

The Giant Elk

wood. And in this evil place, for it has an air as though enchanted, we hear a rumbling, taken up of a sudden, just behind, out of the trees. It is broken and ends in dissonance. And another horn begins. They are ram's horn trumpets, which will never blow a perfect note but become muffled, till the breath dies in them, hoarsely. But they start, clear and ringing. Another and another sounds: but there is nothing to be seen. It is the gigantic deer. The elk hounds got scent of him in a brake where the stream bends to run down into the lough. He may have slept the night there, for the grass is all trampled into mud. He may have eaten from the blackberry briars, while his great antlers clashed upon the branches.

We do not see him, yet. But, in another moment, he stands at bay in a little clearing and we behold this ghost from the age of giants. His stature is a matter for astonishment, even if you are prepared for it. And so rare has he become that his every appearance cannot fail to strike with this effect. Like all ghosts the giant elk is colourless. That is to say, he is black or grey. In certain lights he is the white elk, as at this moment in an autumn morning. So immense is the span of his antlers that they must have had some other purpose than ornament or self-defence. It could not have been for mere battle against the other stags. Those antlers, which from tip to tip are nine or ten feet wide, could be used for snow ploughs in an Ice Age when the long winter turned to spring. Or it may have been that they were meant to ward off some terrible, extinct bird, a pterodactyl, or other monster, more of a winged lizard than a bird, its sails being webs of membrane between giant claws, with which it wheeled and soared, its cruel jaws being set with bony teeth, its breath, could we but know it, reeking of the charnel house, for it fed on flesh and blood. Not capable of flying to great distances, but soaring from the rocky pinnacles wherein it made its lair, this bird of scale and bone, for it was not feathered yet, would give battle,

Death of the Elk

and in imagination we may hear the rattle of its slats and vanes for that could have been no sound of plumes but a noise of skin and bone and a creaking of its bony articulations.

A million, or many million years ago : but such may have been the giant elk in its origins and in the reason for its huge defences. Now those are useless, or nearly so. Even the elk hounds are too little to be caught upon the points, for they are loosed now from their golden collars, but the huge antlers work as a scoop or shovel lifting the dogs and dropping them, while others tear at its legs and flanks. Spears are couched, and the elk runs again and again upon them, bending the thin shafts. Some twenty or thirty hounds, together, pull him to the ground. The huntsmen put their bronze swords into him with a soft, heavy sound. His mouth and tongue drop blood and he raises, or attempts to raise his head, as though to try his crown. The dying of the giant elk is a piteous sight, and it should be a parable to the King who stands before him. In a moment his tower of fronds totters, it lifts again, and leans and falls.

In all the land there may not have been more than a hundred families of these gigantic deer. They were as rare as that. Their skulls and antlers have been discovered in the Irish bogs. A pair of them, hanging in the gallery above the hall at Hardwick, in the grey silence of that paradise of needlework, below that room which has the painted stucco hunting scenes, is more romantic, even, than any other object in that most beautiful of houses. It was the memory of them, in childhood, that determined me to write of this. They were so much older than the heraldic carvings of the mantelpieces, than the window mullions, or the antlered oak trees of the deer park. This was a gigantic deer, found in a bog, and that had been hunted once. Hardwick was the home of talbots or mastiffs, but no dog is bigger than the elk hound. It

Antlers at Hardwick Hall

has come down from the age of giants. It would be fitting and beautiful, in symbol, to hang the golden torque upon the great elk's whitening skull and listen to more legends of magic and chivalry from the remote past.

How silent it is in that great house! A pause, or an interlude; as if the notes of the virginal had but just died away, and one listened for what would happen next. And had waited for three hundred years while the carved wood became bleached white with age, until the tapestry hung in shreds and its figures of giant and paladin were darkened or obliterated by the hand of time. But the golden torque—while it garlands, could it do so, the skull of that giant elk—speaks from another world, not of tapestry. Leander does not swim to Hero across a golden Hellespont, to come up, wet and glistening, into her bed chamber. There will come the night of tempest when Leander drowns, and Hero throws herself from her tower and perishes among the waves. That night will come: but it is not yet. Neither are the hunting tapestries upon the loom. No one of those personages, real or unreal, is yet born.¹ The golden torque is so much more ancient. And yet the older it is, the more that world was young. It was the youth of mankind, and the monstrous forms were dying, or already dead. The giant elk is a messenger of that. And the torque speaks, already, of magic and the arts of man.

Near the brake, where the elk fell, there stood the Blue Man's Bower. So called, even now, upon an ordnance map. An earthen rampart and a ring of trees; but, why the name? Blue Man, in early speech, could mean a black man, a negro; though it may have more significance than that. What mystery in the name! And how it takes us, in a breath, out of the closed rooms where nothing will ever live again into the

¹ A Mortlake tapestry of Hero and Leander hangs upon the staircase at Hardwick Hall. The great hunting tapestries which were formerly in the house have been moved to Chatsworth.

Blue Man's Bower

primitive world! Blue Man's Bower; a place of retreat, a leafy cell, of peculiar or mysterious inmate, a shelter where he hides, not quite a refuge for it suggests that he is busy in it, that he weaves or spins, not skeins of wool but webs of magic, that he is the solitary inhabitant, and guards it with his incantations. Near enough to hear the belling of the stags at midnight while the moon increases. To see the white shadow of the giant deer. And what does the Blue Man live upon? On the dew upon his lawn: on the berries and the watercress, for he eats no meat. He is of another blood. Where was the Blue Man that morning when the King passed by? Unborn: or long since dead. Perhaps he was no one individual, but at various times this was a haunted place, with living ghosts. It was ever, and is still, enchanted. No countryman would spend a night here. It is shunned by tramp and Gypsy. Too much, or too little, has happened in it. For it could be a theory that this is the scene of minor enchantments, an entrance to the Court of Elfame, to be known from what was described, as late as 1662, by Isobel Gowdie, the witch of Forfar, when she went into the Fairy hill: 'and got meat there from the Queen of Fairy. There was elf-bulls routing and skoyling up and down there and affrighted me . . . the hill opened, and we came to a fair and large braw room in the daytime. There are elf-bulls routing and skoyling there at the entry, which feared me.' Just so, on certain days, was Blue Man's Bower. And, at other times, untenanted: but for ever haunted. Here and now, before the body of the elk is cold, we hear the barking of their watchdogs and enter Queen Mab's kingdom by a postern under the leaves, where stands a sentinel in a helmet of green rushes.¹

Listen! and you will hear strange sounds. Broken chords

¹ Blue Man's Bower, as here described, is an ancient earthwork in Hallamshire, not far from Sheffield. But similar remains exist in Ireland, in County Wicklow.

Queen Mab Scherzo

and hollow murmurings, and as well, all the noises of a summer wood. The pumpkin chariot, drawn by mice, comes past. Though it is midday, the spider's web gleams brighter than in the brilliant moonlight. Men wear 'red-tripled caps and the ladies a light fantastic headdress which waves in the wind'. Linen, whiter than ever seen, is spread out upon the grass. But it is the world of dwarves and midgets. The senses dissolve in unreality. Their barndoor fowls are no higher than a thimble; spangled cocks and hens, or pencilled white and silver, with coral combs. The gnat comes like a lady, a demoiselle, with high wimple and gauze wings. A toad is a burgher of the docks and wharves in an ancient harbour silted up with slime, under the dock leaves. But such are images of an older world. We must go to the yew tree, for it was there that the blue man made his bower. The trunk is red as if bleeding; and, all round, the other stems are limbs of flesh grown livid in the rains. Some have the moisture in great drops upon them, as it might be the sweat upon the forehead of a dying man. And, under them, the maggot is working, and the cocoon is hidden just below the bark. The ivy has its black and funeral grapes. Down the hollow wind one bough rubs with a sighing sound upon another.

Is it to-day; or is this living moment twenty centuries or more ago? A coach, which is a hazel nut, is dragged into a tunnel at the root of a big tree. There are midget workmen sawing and planing; but their tools are their own feet or hands, and they lift with their lantern jaws, or pull their loads along. Everyone has his or her own task to do, imposed by instinct. Their state or nation may be the monstrous image of their own selves, winged for her nuptials, as with the Queen Bee. Her husbands die of love. All is implicit obedience. There is no questioning of authority. None can revolt: for it is against nature to act as an individual or have a mind. But it is not all slavery. There are independent spirits that work

Dead Man in a Ditch

for themselves and find a living. And we are being watched from under every leaf. The Court of Elfame reaches, not into the distance, but into an infinity of smallness, down and down the scale for ever, till the mushroom ring is bigger than a belt of stars. But it is an interlude, of no more substance than soft music dying. In another moment there is nothing left of it.

The golden torque is in being but has not yet been clasped upon a long white robe. We have seen that the world of stone circles had, as it were, a nether world inhabited by earlier races differing in stature and in physiognomy from the conquerors. Their stone monuments were imposed upon a new-won land, from ostentation, and in superstition of what had gone before. The golden torque belonged to the new world. It will have been given, for bond of authority, to a person who came upon a visit and left a few days later. A Druid's belt would be worn continually, as Kings in those days wore their crowns. But we would follow it, not in its own adventures, but for a symbol of a golden age. In what sense? That there were persons of privilege who were protected by the laws. They had made themselves sacred. From here—it could be in County Wicklow, where so much gold was found—we conceive the golden torque was carried in a skiff or coracle across the sea, worn on the person, landing at an isle of saints,¹ for so it became in legend when another faith had come, taken, thence, to the mainland from that place of gulls and guillemots, where their crying voices filled the air, and so, into the hills among the Brythons. The Goidels were their enemies; but it is not our task to separate those Montagus and Capulets. Their brawls were in the mountains and along the sea coast. There had been a rout, one morning, and

¹ Bardsey, the 'isle of bards', off the coast of Caernarvon. According to Giraldus Cambrensis (1188) it held the bones of twenty thousand saints.

The Drum of Serpents' Skin

toward nightfall a tall man was overtaken as he fled along the hedges. Someone killed him : but was, himself, surprised and had to throw the torque away. That should be its history. If you know the spot, dig, and you may find the crock of gold!

But we have had enough of the dolmen and the megalith. The age of bronze or copper, but it was also universally an age of gold, moves to its climax. We would breathe again the ancient airs. We have entered the tomb mounds, have walked between the standing stones. We have seen them in their festivals when they danced upon the hills, and the green pyramid cast its shadow to the white flower in the hedge. Kings and queens of a golden age in their gold masks : and a history of the golden torque.

But the hour of the hecatomb advances down the land. We hear the drum of serpents' skins. Burning flesh, throbbing heart are laid bare. It is every human sacrifice there has ever been, in one. From the hills and lakes, the sweet downs and endless plains. All through the world of bronze or copper, from the stone circle to the stone pillar by the sea. In every tongue, in every land, of every origin, for it is a degree or phase, a point in civilization beyond which no progress can be made and that particular world must end in ruins. Their truth, even, to the pattern to which they belong is more to human sacrifice than to the stone monuments they left behind them. It is in their sacrifice that they conform to type. It is from this we take our liberty to wander the whole world.

We come to the stepped pyramid, or teocalli. The processions passed right round the pyramid, up its five storeys, one by one, each time traversing its four faces till they came to another stairway and reached a higher terrace, diminishing in length, until they reached to the flat summit. At the Great Teocalli, in 1486, not forty years before the coming of the Spaniards, there had been a sacrifice which lasted for some

The Teocalli

days. Victims had been kept specially for this purpose over a period of years. The procession was two miles in length, and seventy thousand perished on the stone of sacrifice. There were whole hecatombs of children, borne along in open litters, wearing their brightest dresses, and decked with flowers. There had never been human sacrifice on such a scale as this. It was the apotheosis. The occasion was the dedication of the temple, in Mexico City, by Ahuizotl. Even so, in any one year, the number of victims in all Anáhuac or Mexico was never less than seventy thousand, and may have doubled or trebled that figure in certain years. The Spaniards were horrified at what they saw performed before their eyes. But we may wonder what the Aztecs would have said to the burning of heretics upon the Quemadero! In Seville, alone, it is calculated that 34,612 persons were burned alive by the Inquisition between 1481 and 1781. All over Spain and Portugal and their dominions the numbers will have been proportionably greater. But there is a monotony in acts of death. It is better to resume the thread or chain of these barbarian rites. For we are not dealing with mere cannibals. It was a concept or doctrine belonging to an age. Both sorts were human sacrifice: the teocalli and the Quemadero: though no more wanton than were certain wars. But that is in mere comment. Our necessity is to trace the connection between these smoking altars in all parts of the world, and to treat of them as an integral or aesthetic whole, a degree or phase of the human spirit that argued, at least, an appreciation of the mystery of life since the highest ritual was to give back this gift into the hands that gave it. Human sacrifice was an intercession, not a punishment. Its tragedy is that, like all punishments and most prayers, it was in vain.

Not for this reason did the clouds melt into showers. The time of drought came to an end but was not influenced by blood or tears. Nature was indifferent: as were the gods. In

Volcanic Eruption

every land where the forces of nature were worshipped, and not the human soul, the attendance upon something arbitrary or working with another set of rules was bound to be accompanied by self-inflicted suffering. Such is the argument against idolatry. Is it more wicked than the devil in one's own soul? Ask those who died upon the block of jasper, or bound to the stake; and sift their ashes and gather up their bones! On the place of execution in Madrid the cinders and ashes were still lying thick when the ground was dug over, a hundred years ago; while, upon the summit of the teocalli, in one building only, of those that were destined for the purpose, the Spaniards counted 136,000 skulls belonging to those who had been sacrificed. It is two cultures, two civilizations, contrasted, which make history.

We will end this, not as a statement of fact, but in hallucination. For it would be impossible to paint the huge holocaust in words. We may choose, therefore, the occasion, and would have it in an eruption.¹ Midday will be as dark as night. It is a day of storm and lightning. A pall of ashes sifts down and seeps upon the town. The flat summit of the teocalli is on a level with the fires that shake on the horizon. The whirlwind shrieks and raves. So low have the clouds come that their torn locks sweep over the teocalli with a chill breath, the next moment breathing fire, as if the entire firmament will ignite. No mountain, no volcano, nothing can be seen, except the white houses of the town, flat roofed, like open cubes, below, down the sheer glaxis of the pyramid. It could be a deserted town. No one dares come out. Ashes already lie heavy on the roofs. They fall like a grey snow, but heavier

¹ Since the Spanish conquest there have been eruptions of Popocatepetl in 1519, 1523, 1539, 1548, 1571, 1592, 1642, 1664, 1697, and 1802. It will have erupted more frequently before the Spaniards came. The volcano is some fifty miles from Mexico but dominates the city, rising some ten thousand feet, or nearly two miles, above the valley of Mexico. Iztaccihuatl, also, but that has long been sleeping.

Beating of the Drum of Serpents' Skin

and less haphazard. But who would have time for this? It is the hour of blood and gore. The drum of serpents' skin was beaten in the night before the evil dawn. We will go back to that plumed and scaly signal, high in air. The skinned serpents shriek and writhe in it. The voice of their own torture, while the knife of obsidian lays bare their bones. From horned tail to crested head. Who knows when a snake is dead and will not twist again! The drum of stretched skins was sewn together a long time ago, and who has heard it knows the whole continent of feathered men. Its note is a vibrant screeching, beaten in many rhythms, by relays of drummers. No instrument of percussion ever had its serpent lips, or such shudderings which were as the flicker of its fangs. The first note comes suddenly, for no reason, and with no warning. Those who are to be sacrificed shiver in their cages. In their wreaths of flowers. It is like fire set to the cauldron. There is no escaping. And the firmament has joined in the slaughter. The procession is formed, and climbs to the lightning. At moments, the whole pyramid is lapped in flames. For lightning flickers on every side. There is no dawn. Only a greying, a corruption on the dark. The marks as of death: and its change from pale to livid. This is darkness made visible: the other was stone blind. The flat top of the teocalli is as a piazza with no arches. In this hour of horror they have fallen backwards: down, down, down. There is no edge, no rampart. Nothing but the sheer drop on to the town. But this flat space is big enough for a battle of a thousand men. They will fight here with Cortez, and the bodies will be tumbled down, falling from rock to rock, like a fight upon the cliffs.

And our heads come above the level of the terrace. We have reached the top. Daemoniac forms inhabit the teocalli, and have come out from it. And a noisome smell, a stench as from the jaws of some monster. It is the long and matted hair, the clotting blood upon the robes. Long twisting hair, not

Carrion Men

washed, nor combed, kept dishevelled to instil terror: and the stained robes of husbandmen who tread the grapes, soaked in the sacred blood. Their robes have gone stiff with it: and they stink of blood. It is a thick crust: not a must like wine. It has run down to the hem, and hangs from it in an integument of its own, that is not the fabric. It is a thick scab upon the waist and shoulders. The cotton gown must be so heavy, like an overcoat. But it is never taken off. It stays till it disintegrates. Not one, but many gowns grown together, as it were. And that no scavenger durst pick apart. Not a coat of many colours. It may be scarlet, in bright stains, but it clots with all the rest. No longer marking with the hand. The hand of man has slaughtered, here, till all is too soaking to keep the human imprint. They live, eat, and lie down to sleep in blood. We do not know the number of these priests or executioners. They are celibate, and spend their whole lives upon the pyramid. Never coming down into the town. The carrion men do not walk among the crowd. In the market, between the fruits and flowers of the chinampas. Oared by the piragua from the floating gardens.¹ They have slain too many children. Birds of their propensity must keep to the high places. They come down no lower than the first incline of the ascent but accompany their victims from the threshold, and put fans into their hands and crown their heads with plumes.

We could compare them to vultures who never leave the tree or rock in which they make their nest. But come down from it to seize their prey. And, in fact, like the condor, it is no nest at all. Merely a sleeping place, and where they squat to eat. In any corner of the teocalli, rain or fine, they lie down to sleep. Their little fires are lit upon the summit; or, in a wind, at some sheltered angle of the ascent, where they prepare their maize. Occasion, and virginity, have made them cruel. We would see them in their encampments, which are

¹ Chinampas are the floating gardens. Piraguas are the Indian canoes.

The Bleeding Place

nothing of the sort, merely their crouching forms at the fire of cactus or dried sticks. Their lives spent in the air have made them nimble on the stones. They run up or down with the gait of fisherfolk inhabiting some village high upon a cliff, who run down to the sea, and up the cobbled path again. They know every stone, and do not need to look. As with other strange beings, who are peculiar from their environment, they seem not to sleep. All night through they talk, fitfully, too high up to be heard from down below, having slept for an hour or two in the sun and needing no more rest for their distorted nerves. They have not to keep their eyrie clean. This is no galleon sailing through the skies: but a fouled nest, clotted with gore and filth, a rocky ledge that the vulture has dirtied with her droppings, with here a bone and there a sinew, or some shreds of skin. Only the skulls are collected, as we know, and stored away in towers. It is a slippery surface, and it stains the feet. Swarms of flies are settled in the crevices. The lizard has waxed fat. It is a slaughter ground. How it has coagulated upon the block of jasper! Like the thickest lacquer, gone liquid, running a little, as though scorched in a fire. Sticky, or trickling, if you could bear to touch it. In stains or splashes, not like the rain-drops that come down in a pattern, but ejected in agony, in a spasm; or as though from a sack, that is hit and splits its sides, and what is within floods out, but lies near to its parent. This sort of bleeding is as a monstrous childbirth. There is some tie between the body and the blood that flows from it. Or, again, there are the spurting fountains. Like a spring on to which a rock has rolled; and the release of it causes the source to leap into the air. Blood leaps like that from the human heart. Men and women love with their hearts and not their brains. Little children, also, as those who have known such things could tell. And how long a heart can bleed! Till there is no blood left in it. It throbs and pumps. It is the only

Agony of the Human Heart

live thing in the human organs. The rest is sacks and piping. He who holds a heart in his hand has something that is struggling not to die. It makes the effort to live of itself. It is embryonic. Throw it on the stones and it will go on beating. It could be the fish stage in human development, when our ancestor was the soft amœba, which could shut or open of itself, but had no power of motion. Touch it! Tread on it! It has the will to live. It struggles more and more, convulsively, leaping and bounding. Can the soul escape from it? The soul has fled long ago. Whither? And from what receptacle? Not the brain, surely. The hands have something of the soul in them. So have the eyes. Those who have seen many deaths may ponder on such things. And our turn will come. When we have done with bloodshed. For there is to be other human sacrifice. It will be death and the maiden.

So the executioners seize upon their victims. They hustle them up the ascent. And we have already reached the summit of the teocalli. They are a band of dark harpies. It has been written of the harpies that they emit an infectious smell, and spoil whatever they touch with their filth and excrements. We have said, of the priests, that their vocation has made them cruel. They take a delight in tormenting. The butchers drive the beasts to slaughter, and beat them upon the way. It is fearful upon the climb. What will it be when their lair is reached, where the god has set foot to earth! It is more terrible because of the intense dark. The plunge from life into eternal death yawns in that black chasm on all four sides. One is about to be smitten and disintegrated: limb from limb, bone from bone, tumbled from rock to rock, when the body can no more be bruised. How long does it last? It is like an evil dream. Does one die with the first stroke of the glassy knife! For the blade is of itzli, hard as flint, and fired in the volcano. It only needs one stab: and a hand tears out the heart, and throws it on the stones.

Harpies of the Teocalli

We see the rite enacted before our eyes. Man, woman, or child: it is all the same. Four harpies pounce upon him, and bind him hand and foot. With a peculiar movement he is thrown or tipped upon the block, and held down. The killer, whose turn it is, for there is nothing to distinguish them but their dexterity, rips him open with a flicking wrist, and plunges his left hand into the wound. The heart is torn out, tearing easily from the veins and arteries with a little noise of laceration, a fat tearing sound of something covering and stretching. It is still smoking from its body warmth and dropping great gouts of blood. It palpitates, and would leap over and turn upon itself. The ripping open must be like a sharp fire within the breast. When the hand feels for the heart, and grips it, and pulls it out, it must be a stroke of disembodiment. For all feeling leaves the body with the heart, following it in blind manner on to the stones; but not able to inhabit it, rising like the steam from it, and we doubt it not, hoping, dumbly, to be put back again. What happens after, the head and body do not feel. Death was quicker than childbirth. The convulsive movements are animal instinct more than feeling. Does the babe wish to be back again within its mother's womb? Why does it weep? In order but to breathe: because it is homeless: or because the world is cruel? It is probable that such a death awakens some bodily memory of birth. The body has not forgotten. Those are its two supreme moments, birth and death. How could it ignore them: or not know that one is the beginning, and one the end! It struggles for its birthright, though blind, and deaf, and dumb. Some have more fight in them than others. There are those who were born piteous, as if pleading, and who meekly surrender. We could see hearts, thrown down on to the stones, that are as helpless as young birds fallen from their nests. This was a thing that, one day, would have plumes and try the air. And, this, the emblem or masque of love. That has loved, indeed,

Drowning in the Cenote

in some sort, since the night that it was born. A force instilled, or wound up, when it lived within its parent, in the dark night of the womb, that began beating and has never stopped. That beat faster, fed by secret springs, for there are two loves and both are not the same. That returns, now, to the former and forgets the other. For, in death, the loving heart can no longer love in that way. Death brings back again the puking babe. It is helpless, and maybe, can speak only from the eyes.

This thing upon the stones was, once, a beating heart. Now it is but a rudiment, a rude image, dying like a bird or fish. All the hearts of the holocaust, together, do not help each other. So many polyps, or sponges, heavy but with blood, which drips from them. The arms of the priests will grow stiff from the slaughter. Their wrists will be swollen. And one, handing the knife over to another, will hold his hand in water, not washing the blood from it, and have it bandaged, and after a rest, go back for more.

But we have done with shedding blood. Come away to the cenote! It is death by drowning. The cenote is a deep well dug into the rock. The water level may be a hundred feet below the ground. There are cenotes that are natural caverns with stairs leading down into them, or rough ladders that only an Indian foot could hold, length after length of ladder, more swaying than a bridge of rope, and in utter darkness, down to the dark pool at the bottom. But this has an open orifice. It is the well into which they throw young maidens. They are hurled into the well at dawn. Most will die immediately from terror: some survive for an hour or two, clinging to the walls of rock. If they drown at once and there is no movement in the well it is an evil omen. Stones are thrown down, and the priests flee from the cenote with loud lamentation. No help must be given. After that hour or so, and much weeping and then sighing, there will be no more struggle. Once in a lifetime, as though by miracle, there is a stirring all

Death and the Maiden

the morning, and at noon, men are sent down with ropes and the virgin is brought out. She is questioned as to what the gods intend. In that pregnant darkness she will have had visions. She descended into the underworld and has come up. That is a subject or legend, that we will treat again. A dead person is brought back to life; but we will not anticipate.

The theme of the cenote is love without the lover's happiness. It is death and the maiden. As a concept it is universal, to all the world, for which reason we have not made it Indian. It can be that, in immediacy, for things Indian mate in the mind with soft skins of dusk, like amber, with bright plumes, and unknown fruits and flowers. A virginity thrown to other winds, and under other stars. The cenote is the poem of the well. Not death and the maiden, only, but death and the fountain. There are dreams and visions that have to do with this. Ghosts of the well head. The dipping of the pitcher, and the cool draught it brings out of the rock. How the waters diminish, month after month, and are mysteriously replenished before the rain comes. How they can run dry, and the well must be disused for ever after. All for no reason. But there must be a cause. The waters are inhabited by an old man or a maiden. In all legends: and by snakes or monsters. But the human personification is ever the nymph or water god. Here, at the cenote, a virgin is thrown down into the well. It is so strange to hear words of anguish coming up out of the water. It is where Ophelia lies floating in a shroud of weeds. The white water flowers are like stars upon her hair. Look at her, days or weeks later, and there will be more green tresses. Her eyes and nostrils will be below the water, as though her head was sunk upon her chest in sleep. No hand would unwrap her. The mummy bandages are too spiced for that. And bound with too much care. All the straight lines are blurred and hazy. Her beauty has become softened. What was like to a young animal, a lamb or doe, has swelled for

Ophelia

sleep. Look not for the book, or flower, between her cheek and hair! Or for the white dove with folded wings. Death has embalmed the virgin. His cocoon or chrysalis, in which he keeps her, was not woven by moth or spider. His own sutlers spread it over her. And the long work was accomplished in a day or two. What they have done cannot be undone. It will disintegrate; or liquefy. Her waxen image cannot be seen again, for that is the first stage of death, when it keeps the likeness. But this has long lost all similitude. None would know her : she is only told by tally of circumstance and time. And, maybe, by a golden ring.

Thus, Ophelia; but, not so, the maidens of the cenote. For the Indians throw their golden ornaments into the well. Not only golden idols, but half the treasures of the nation. Precious jade and copal incense. The bottom of the well has now been dredged for these. Much has perished; and, of those left, most have lost their workmanship after ten centuries in the water. The maidens' bones have rolled to the edges of the well upon a slope of golden trinkets. It is a long time since a virgin came down into the water. The sacrifice took place in years of drought. But the legend must become Indian again. We would see the goddess of the golden maize, for it is her ghost that climbs from the well. Not the fountain below the olive trees, bubbling out of the limestone: not the well among the cypresses: nor the chiming water in the orange grove. Forget those purple skies! This is not the spring that rises among the kingcups in an April wood of lords and ladies. Lambs bleat in the meadows, some with black feet and muzzles, and there are vernal primroses and cuckoo flowers. Soon, the cowslip will lift her bending heads, and children, who scarce can walk, will make cowslip balls to take home to their mothers. All the Elizabethan age breathes from these. Try their oranges and lemons! But it is now, not then. Not a lark, but a bomber, drones in the empty

Goddess of the Maize

sky. Cloth-of-gold is laid down in the meadows. There are buttercups up to the shadow of the elms. Next, the dog rose hangs in the hedges. And, all the summer, there will be bloodshed, for long after the dying of the leaf.

It is not this. The cenote belongs to another world: not ours: nor Asia, Africa, nor the Mediterranean. The maize goddess is no blonde Ophelia. Her duskiness is as a shadow. These are the shadow Indies. There is something unreal and inimical in them. See her come up out of the water! Not Aphrodite, naked; nor the black Venus Callipyge. Not the jasmined dancer of the lotus pool. This is the goddess of complications. Like all shadows, she has a changing outline. Her image waxes and wanes. It is the continent of feathers. No portrait can be fixed that is all dressed in plumes. Their art lies in suggestion, and not in line. A whole megalith becomes a robe of feathers, but upon the flat bas-relief it can only be given in a static fluttering. Not followed, filament by filament, but translated into an idiom. It is a tongue which few can understand. We must learn to see below the plumes. Upon an evening, coming out of a glade of unknown blossoms, we would see the Indian husbandmen carrying the planting stick, their only implement, a pointed pole with which they make a hole in the earth and sprinkle it with seed. This is the planting of the maize. When the harvest is here, they come round again and bend down the ripened cobs, in order that these should be dried upon the stalk. It is their grain harvest. Their physiognomy and their walk are curious. For they run, or amble; and, often, their heads have been bound from childhood so that their skulls are of peculiar conformation. The forehead slopes at a hieratic angle, and the back of the head is rounded. In effect, their craniums rise to a peak; and identical treatment has made them all alike. In life, they are as difficult to distinguish as upon their carved monoliths. Not so, the maize goddess; who is nude and

Carnival in the Land of Mares' Milk

painted blue. It is the sacrificial colour, and her skin is rubbed with a blue unguent. The maiden has assumed the virginity of the god for whom she died. She has become a living god on earth. Copal incense is burnt before her and the gum of the white acacia. This is the meaning of the rain festival, for if it falls the maize will begin to sprout.

The maiden goddess has corncobs for breasts. A race who fed their cattle on the sunflower seeds, and worshipped the sunflower, would have a simple image for their god or goddess. A giant with a head looking down, heavy with harvest, and a parhelion, a mimic sun of golden locks. In a Northern land, a tundra, or steppe. Let us think of it! A town of painted houses, frescoed with mares and stallions and great flowers, the land of koumiss, of fermented mares' milk, of golden cupolas. We hear violins in this golden light of sunset. There is a perpetual fair held in the market place. The sunflower, sown from seed, nods his giant stature in the gardens. We can imagine masks of the sunflower carried in procession; or mimicked by acrobats on stilts. The maiden sunflower is Pomona or Ceres of the window sill. Her anthropomorphic image is easily invoked. For the foliage of the sunflower rattles like the maize leaves. It is a rustling, a papyrus noise, known at the fountain of Arethusa.

Listen to the maize leaves sighing in the wind! This is the music of the mock Indies. She has corncobs for breasts. It was a bloodless sacrifice. Her ghost is surrendered by the sacred well, intact, with unbroken limbs. This is not the horror of the teocalli. At times, on the pyramid, the corpse was flayed and his slayer put on the dead man's skin and danced in it, and wore the skin for several days. The cenote has no hint of war. When the maiden was hurled into the well, it is even possible that the weeping onlookers were a necessary part of the sacrifice, signifying tears were an intercession for the rain. A woman weeps when her child is born,

Virgin of the Well

and from weakness afterwards. It is an agony of her faculties and her emotional centres are affected. The babe weeps, too. And his first months are spent in tears. The gestation of the rains, and their protraction or delay, belong to the same order of symbols. A virgin must be mother or goddess of the maize. She must come up, weeping, from the well. And dripping from the waters. She is given back into the world again, weeping, having come out of the womb. In the long trance from dawn till noon she has dwelt in the underworld, and is pregnant with what is to come. If she whispers, and cannot speak, it is from her communion with the gods. This is the mystery of the cenote. She is in the half-world, a hundred feet below the surface of the earth, with as much water under her as she lies, fainting, in that false dark. Blue is the shade of night, of death, of sacrifice. The blue unguent still shows upon her. But let the feathered Indies fade or dissolve, for time being, in this painted vision.

Wider landscapes spread before us. The whole primitive world converges to the sound of harps. The tremendous plains of the four continents gather their inhabitants into the sacred places. We would call this the adoration of the golden calf. For it is a huge assembly, at many different times, in mid-summer, while thunder gathers behind the mountains. We choose a hill side where the groups are not static but must climb or scramble. The scene is peopled half-way into the sky. For the action is as steep as upon a stair or ladder. It lifts and holds its population before our eyes.

We spoke of music. It is a great sweeping of the strings. Whole chords struck together, but of semitones or quarter tones, studied for their effects of reiteration. Even the one note, played incessantly, can be hypnotic. Mere phrases incite to war, or can set a nation dancing. The animal in man is drugged or lulled by this. There are, as well, bronze trum-

Adoration of the Golden Calf

pets, the ram's horn, and the conch shell. The level trumpet note: music that turns and winds: and sea music. Bucolic tones that echo the valley and the hanging hill: voices out of cave mouths: music from under sea. But, mostly, it is the sweeping of the strings. Processional music taught under the oak trees; the slow rhapsody. Nothing feminine. It is masculine and tremendous: effects of tongues of fire and rushing winds: wider in scope than what would be believed of it, there are such undertones and assonances. It is an urging forward. The shadow of the condor's wings who sails above the plain, and in an instant is in his native mountain where the storms begin. Gales that tear at the lone trees of the chace. The beating of the rain upon the megalith. And entire, unbreathed summers of the flowering plain. Woods that are blue with lilies below the cooing of the turtle dove. The heat of August, for there were Augusts, then, with mist along the valley, hoary nettles and wild garlic silvering the vale. All this in the music. Or it can be no more than simple and broad harmonies upon a hundred harps.

For the schools of music advance along the plain. The golden calf, or what you will, is to be worshipped in a hundred different places. They are dragging the idol up the hill side with all the strong men of the nation. It is a festival and a war, at once, for the whole race is chained to it. The hauling of a battering ram up to a wall of brass. This, because of the strong sunlight. For the whole landscape is a golden idyll, and the green trees burn like faggots in it. The very grass of the hillside is a green or yellow flame that scorches.

Slowly, slowly, with many pauses the idol climbs to the hill top. It is high noon. The pyramid, for that is standing, and the shadow pyramid are joined upon the sand. Every object that is static has its tent of shade. It is these mysteries that are worshipped. But how many legends are not yet born! This is a great dancing and rejoicing, and the whole multitude

Adoration of the Golden Calf

is in movement. A kermesse, but without wine or beer. There are spirits made from rye and millet, the ferment of milk or honey, juice of cactus or of agave, roots that must be chewed or shredded and then left to gather strength from their rankness, nettle wine and flower wines, the corruption of the petal, every intoxicant according to the clime. For the scene is general and not particular. It is in any place and at any time, not careful as to a thousand years but deep in the true antiquity. The pyramid was mentioned, but only to note that its shadow lay along the golden land. It has been built and cased with marble many hundred years ago, but the simple lines of its geometry have been extended to the ends of the world. No one, here, has heard of it, though, as the shadows creep along the earth, mysteries are talked of, and human beings begin to wonder who and what they are. The return of time is the only safe prophecy, proving order and symmetry in nature. Like all primitive things this scene is great and simple. The chords of a hundred harps direct its motions. Music has been born from wood or metal, from the conch shell or the carapace. The abracadabra gives up its secrets. Dreams are interpreted: and medicine is as much of magic as it was until a hundred years ago. So much of science has begun in superstition. There are mysteries without end. Mysterious, now: not more mysterious, then. The most simple ones resist the larger. Mysteries of life and death, for instance. And it may be our own age is near its time, and will relapse before we grasp at them. The great anarch is about to let the curtain fall upon another play of human folly. Now, in the few months that lie before us. Not in this tremendous and unsullied noon. Do not be uneasy! Do not listen for the throbbing engine! Here, no steel shadows race along the plain. There is nothing swifter than the swallow.

We have the Dynasties of shepherd kings. On that golden day you could behold a nation dancing. The adoration of the

Adoration of the Golden Calf

golden calf begins on every hill, in every valley. On a site, chosen in mystery, upon the rolling plain. At the meeting of the waters, where the numbers chime and there is perpetual harmony, down the ages, from hidden fountains. Under the plane trees where water springs out from the rock. By the bottomless tarn. At a spot, marked by a stone, where a young girl saw a vision. Where the two-headed lamb was born. Or a panic, for no reason, began among the flocks. An object was found that had a human likeness. Young children heard voices in the open country. The idiot fell in a seizure and babbled unknown words. Or there are sites of expediency. Upon an island. Half-way between the summer and the winter pastures, mid-way between the seasons, at a fixed point, therefore, in the nomad circle. In a valley of sweet grass. In the rocks where there was wild honey. Where the herbs were aromatic and the goat milk would be rich in cream. Or of the moment. When the slope would be white with narcissus. Or blue with iris. Not for the flowers' sake, but because at that season a star was in transit; or the moon was waxing and they had sown the rye. For the mating of the heifers, when the bulls' horns were garlanded with flowers. In the month of lambing, at the early year, when the spring night was loud with bleating and mothers could think a little babe was weeping. When the first buds burst upon the trees on a seraphic morning. When the grain turned golden. At the planting of the cactus. For the gleaming of the shoal of fishes, watched for from the cliff. For the festival of the trident. The fishing net is as much of a symbol as the plough-share. Hung up in the moonlight in travesty of the vine upon its pole, coiled up, looped into a curtain, hanging like a snood so as to be near to hand, a shroud or a winding sheet hanging from a gallows, laid out, pegged down upon the sand with stones and pebbles, staked out like a spirit that would rise again, lest the wind blow it like an evil thing along the shore

Adoration of the Golden Calf

and it vanish like smoke into the moonlit air. It is the ghost at its own banquet. Or the feast of the trident is given in its chequered shade. The conch shell is a trumpet and a drinking cup. The mere cockle shell has fluted lips, rilled like the morning sands. Others are mossy or bearded; but all tasting of the sea. Throw down the empty shells and heap them into hills! Blow loud or soft music upon the shell! Sound the sea voice! It is a noise from out the hollow depths. Dance the marine dances!

There are a hundred occasions or excuses, and as many feast days in the universal year. But this is the festival of the solstice. The ploughshare and the trident are melted down for shepherds' crooks. Into a crook of bronze by which to catch at the fleeces by their curls of wool, and not injure the growing lambs. But it is a land of herds as well. The cowherd's crozier is a pointed lance. Melt down the trident to make the tinkling cowbells!

But the golden calf is a symbol or allegory. It does not mean a young steer born in the spring. The pastoral festival spreads through all the lands of flocks and herds. It alters like the solstice. There are cedarn vales and plains of asphodel: a strait, in Pomona, between the threatening waters on a summer morning of brown hills, from purple to saffron, dark sea, and spray: high summer in the Hebrides or Orcadian islands, where the gulls cry and the summer sea sinks and swells upon the seaweed: where the kelp dries, at high tide, upon the coloured rocks: within the stone circle upon the rolling downs: in the cyclopæan age wherever found: among the nuraghi of Sardinia and Malta, which are cones of masonry and platforms on the hills: or the giants' graves in the same islands: lands of the goat, where a bronze statuette is found among the sepulchres, of a naked man, immensely tall, in a great crested helm, on occasion standing like a god in a chariot, and all else, and this god or warrior,

Adoration of the Golden Calf

is mystery: out in the immensity leading on for ever, where the nations move with the herds, and their only permanence is where their Kings are buried amid a golden treasure: tombs of the golden mask: tents out of which the King comes in his golden fish scale armour: legends of the musk oxen where the distance dies down into a Polar ocean: the serpent mound announcing the continent of feathers: the teocalli: temples of the sun: megaliths by an inland sea at a higher altitude than many mountains: walls of adobe with the imprints of a red hand upon them, as fresh as last night, but it could be a thousand years ago upon the bay of Cozumel, and looking down, the shadow of a huge fish gliding through the parrot waters: shores of the turtle and the harvest of eggs taken up by wandering along the strand: the full cornucopia in every land: whether it be the harvest of the rock pool: or manna of the flowering desert: cob nuts or hazel nuts that tumble like an autumn shower: legends of the golden oats: or but the browsing of the daisied meadows, the descending vale down from the oak forest into a breathless ocean. All celebrations of the summer solstice: by chieftains in the condor-costume with widespread wings to music of the shell-clarion: at the sacrifice of a black llama from the herds of the sun: or the feast of the golden chain, a long rope or cable braided from coloured wools, but entwined with strands and ornaments of gold, which is carried out into the square by men and women before the Incas and the mummies of the illustrious dead, all in their appointed places, as spectators, and the ceremonial dance ends with the dropping of the coiled serpent upon the ground: or at the autumn solstice, when the farms of the Sun are ploughed by priests and priestesses, and a milk white llama with golden earrings accompanied them as guardian: or by other rituals, when warriors bathe under the moonbeams in rivers that flow out of their territory into unknown regions: when dancers in

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long red tunics and diadems of feathers dance to the flowery music of the pipe or syrinx: or when white llamas of a special type, chosen out of all the dominions of the Incas, are sacrificed upon as many fires of saffron-scented wood. So many feasts of the solstice, or festivals of plenty, while the filled cornucopia spills its fruits upon the grass: while the trees bow down with plums and apples: the fungus harvest spawns out of the dew: the berries turn black or yellow on their briars: the pools fill with shell fish: the green cornstalks lengthen and go golden: birds of the feather burn in their brightest plumage: when the fleece is clipped: the loaded bough is shaken: the weighted net is thrown upon the waters: the flail shakes out the golden grain: the seed increases: the white or speckled egg is broken: or it can be brown or blue or mottled in a hundred colours: the lizard basks upon the stone, in sign of summer: the firefly dances; the purple ocean gleams all night: the shadows of the gods are thrown upon the sea: a huge profile, nose and head in one line, passes between the columns: earth and main lie ready for the gods to come: their reflections creep along the waters, and, as quickly, vanish: the haywains tilt between the hedges: the squids and polyps are harvested out of the purple sea; young mares are weaned and join the milk white herd: the little kid grows into the horned and bearded god: leviathan suckles its young far out in the idle summer ocean: the eaglets try their wings, out over the chasm of the plain: the moth and spider rehearse their young among the dead and darkened places. There must be a god for the bat and beetle: for the mountain of fire and for the storm of thunder: their solstice, their equinox, their feast of plenty, even though it be among the dead. Here is death in life, at the cold altar stone: these are the ancient days: the living are alive for but this once, and never more. How quickly it is shed from them! How soft the virgin dies, with but a sigh! A death or two, a hundred

Adoration of the Golden Calf

deaths, are gentler than a war. The festivals are in high places. Stand but by the dewstone and you will have the antique world. We would know what is noble in our ancestry. The cyclopæan epic: the broken legends of the megalith. In its season the cornucopia will run again with fruits and honey. There was a feast of plenty every year: or so the old will tell you of their golden youth. Let us believe them! While the world grows darker: the air shakes as if with distant thunder: and, physical and spiritual, the lights are put out, one by one.

Book II

Red Indian Warrior Customs



Book II

Red Indian Warrior Customs

The wonders of the wild west are to be read of in more than one book of early travels. And, wherever there is an instance, the author has been inspired by the strangeness of the scenes to draw as well as write of it. In particular, the Redskin warriors excited the astonishment of those who beheld them, just in this moment of their extinction. In ten or twenty years they were no more. There are many of these tributes to their magnificent and wild carriage, to the splendour of their bearing. In every one of these, the new, the virgin territory breathes forth. It is a new land, untainted and unknown. Perhaps the most interesting of these authors is George Catlin, who, starting forth in 1832, spent some twenty to thirty years of his life wandering in the great Far West of the North American continent. As he went he painted, thus forming, in the course of time, what he termed his North American Indian Museum, a collection which he eventually placed permanently upon view in different American towns, and in London, at the Egyptian Hall. Its contents have, long since, been scattered and dispersed but a selection of these landscapes and portraits were engraved in outline by himself in illustration of various volumes that he published. It is probable that his paintings benefit considerably by this pro-

The Horde of Buffalos

cess. Particularly in certain etchings of the prairie, the simplicity of outline of those huge spaces of open landscape, with only the figures of the Indian braves galloping on their wild horses in pursuit of the buffalo herds, has points of resemblance to the early etchings of Picasso that are so much admired by contemporary taste. There is one of his etchings, drawn in 1905, or thereabouts, depicting just such an open plain with the figures of Gypsies, or they may well be the acrobats of a travelling fair, exercising their horses in what is beyond dispute the early morning light, and this plate might appear without discrepancy or inappropriateness in supplement to the works of George Catlin.

But a closer investigation brings out many peculiar facts dealing with the Far West. There is, for instance, that incredible army of the buffalos. These animals existed in numbers that are beyond comprehension. Within thirty to forty years they were entirely extinct, to the point that less than a dozen individuals of the race were still living. This was just before 1880. Painfully, and by slow degrees, their number has been again increased in reservations and national parks until there may be, now, several hundreds, or even a few thousands of the animals in existence. But in the time of which we are speaking, and up till the end of the 'seventies, they roamed the prairie in their millions. This was the period of unprecedented slaughter. In terms of numbers, their extermination may have been equivalent to the massacre of the entire human population of a continent. It has been calculated that some sixty-eight millions perished in the 'sixties, during the decade in which the great transcontinental railways were being built.

A train would, often enough, be held up by a herd of tens of thousands. All were indiscriminately slain, slain for the sake of slaughter, or, more profitably, for their skins, of which the original patent leather was made. They were the

The Horde of Buffalos

food of the Indians, who also, but with their inferior weapons, with spears and bows and arrows, exterminated all they found. A typical instance of waste is given by Catlin. At one of the Fur Company's forts, on the Upper Missouri, the Sioux Indians brought in, one evening, no fewer than fourteen hundred fresh buffalo tongues, which they threw down in a mass upon the ground, requiring for them but a few gallons of whisky. Nothing of the skin or meat was saved. It was a season when their skins were without fur, and therefore worthless, while their own tents were sufficiently stocked with fresh and dried meat. The carcasses of these fourteen hundred buffalos were allowed to perish. It was after this manner that their millions were decimated and their thousands turned to tens.

There must be persons still living, and not more than seventy years of age, who saw the last of these enormous herds and can remember the thunder of their tread. This was the end of the primitive world. Nothing in Africa is upon this scale. No Congo forest has this plentitude of living. The desert is desert. It does not teem with life. The American prairie was an epical world, empty like an epic, and with Trojan or Mycenaean heroes, warriors upon an epical scale. They had the nobility, and cruelty, of the ancient legends. Nothing in them was upon a little scale. Their red skins and their eagle plumes, their buffalo robes, put them into a primal simplicity that the western world has not known since the Lion Gate of Mycenae. It is coeval with the stone rings upon our moors, with the tumulus tombs and their bronze weapons, with the vales that had giants or white horses carved into their chalk. It is contemporary to our May Morning; but with no daisied hills, no cuckoos in the trees. Here, there is nothing but the outline of the hills. Sunrise and sunset rise up from the plain. Night comes down like a shadow from the sky. There are no half-moods. It is night

Lights of the Northern Sky

or day. There may be no other part of the world in which the starlight is such a vast display. Everyone who saw this in the early days speaks of the teeming heavens. They glittered with their lights, for this plain stretched unbroken into the Arctic North.

This huge territory of which we are speaking had its culmination in sight, or nearly within sight, of the Rocky Mountains and close to that ruled line which was all the boundary between the United States and Canada. On the far side of it the same conditions went on into infinity; but that was another land, reserved for a different destiny. The painter whom we are accompanying is not concerned with that. In the curious blindness which afflicts those who concentrate too steadily upon the immediate object of their interest he is oblivious to what lies beside, or only just beyond it. This is the precise equivalent of being in love; and its parallels are to be noticed in so many instances where an artist has discovered something which he conceives to be his own and that appertains to him as if it were his own creation. He hardly mentions, therefore, the Indians upon the far side of the border. Yet they, too, were the Redskins of the Far West. It was the boundary that was entirely artificial and arbitrary; a frontier drawn by the white man, where white men had not yet come to claim possession.

The tribes who were the painter's present concern were Sioux, Pawnees, Crows, Blackfoots, Mandans, Minatarees. Of these he writes at length, and paints their portraits. He gives an extraordinary account of a chief of the Mandans, who had promised to pose for him in full war dress, wearing a robe which was painted with the history of all his battles. He had agreed to stand for his portrait at an early hour of the morning. The painter waited, with his palette of colours prepared, from sunrise, but it was twelve o'clock before the chief would leave his toilette. The painter then looked out of the



MAHTOTOHPA (THE FOUR BEARS)
drawn by George Catlin

Portrait of Mahtotohpa

door of the wigwam and saw him approaching with a firm and elastic step accompanied by a great crowd of women and children, who were gazing on him with admiration. No tragedian ever trod the stage, nor gladiator ever entered the Roman arena with more grace and manly dignity, than when he came in through the door of the wigwam. He took his attitude before the painter, and with the sternness of a Brutus, and the stillness of a statue, he stood until the darkness of night.

This was the costume that he wore. His shirt was made of two skins of the mountain sheep, beautifully dressed. The bottom of the dress was bound or hemmed with ermine skins, and tassels of ermines' tails were hung from his arms and shoulders. His leggings were of deerskin. Both his arms and legs had bands down their entire length worked with porcupine quills of the richest dyes, and fringed down their whole length with the scalp locks taken from his enemies. His necklace was made of fifty huge claws or nails of the grizzly bear, worn, like the scalp locks, in trophy of personal combat. His shield was made of the hide of the buffalo's neck, hardened with the glue that was taken from its hooves; his moccasins were of buckskin, covered with embroidery of porcupine's quills. His bow was of bone, but as white and beautiful as ivory; the string being three-stranded and twisted with sinews.

But the most magnificent feature of his apparel was his headdress. This was a crest of war eagles' quills falling from the back of his forehead quite down to his feet. This was set, the whole way, in a profusion of ermine. And the sides of his forehead were surmounted by a pair of buffalo horns, shaved thin and highly polished. The horns on these headdresses were but loosely attached. By an ingenious motion of the head, so slight as to be almost imperceptible, they could be made to balance to and fro, one backward and the other for-

Bloodstains upon an Eagle's Feather

ward, like a horse's ears, giving an intense expression and force of character to his every movement.

It was upon a robe or apron of the skin of a young buffalo bull that his battles were emblazoned. Twelve combats were traced upon it, in which this chief, Mahtotohpa (The Four Bears), had taken fourteen scalps. In the portrait there will be seen an eagle's quill balanced on the hilt of the lance. This eagle's quill he brought in his left hand to the painter's wigwam, and carefully balancing it upon the lance, desired the painter to be very exact with it, to show it as separate, and unconnected from the lance and to represent a spot of blood which was visible upon it. The history of this feather was connected with the most violent of his twelve combats, when, to avenge his brother's murder, he stole into the murderer's tent and with incredible daring slew the assassin. Running out of the lodge of his victim, after his revenge had been taken, he looked back and saw by the light of the fire this feather clinging to the wound in his side. He ran back, pulled it from the wound, and brought it home in his left hand.

If we turn to classical antiquity, in which this sort of action is paralleled, when Pompey was murdered, upon the Egyptian shore, when his head was cut off and sent to Caesar and his body lay naked for some days upon the sand, it was no part of their legend, or their warlike panoply, that a feather should be found hanging to his wound. This could be true only of the Redskin, and other details that have to do with them are of so extreme a character that it is irresistible to quote from them.

We are told of Indians who could run so swiftly that they could follow up and slay a deer from foot, using only their lances and without the aid of bow and arrow. But, if they were clad in feathers, and this example of swiftness is almost in token of that, it is equally correct to describe them as clad in deerskin.

The art of dressing skins belonged peculiarly to the Indians,

The Crows, and their Dresses of White Deerskin

and in particular to the Crows, who surpassed anything that the civilized world could show in this respect. Yet the art of tanning was unknown to them. But the skins were immersed under a lye from ashes and water; they were stretched upon the ground and grained with a sharpened bone, or with a shoulder blade shaped into an adze; finally, they were smoked. A small hole was dug in the ground, and a fire built in it with rotten wood. Poles were stuck in the earth and another skin wrapped round them in the form of a tent, sewed together at the edges to retain the smoke inside. Within this tent of skin, the skins to be smoked were placed, and would remain there a day or so, until by some chemical process or other which has never been understood, the skins acquired a quality which enabled them after being ever so many times wet to dry as soft and pliant as before.

An Indian's dress of deerskin, which was wet a hundred times upon his back, dried softly; and his lodge, standing in the rains, could be taken down after the winter as soft and clean as when it was first put up. The tribe of Crows, who were the experts in this manufacture, were to be known wherever met with, by their great height and their dresses of white deerskin. The Blackfeet by the deerskins, dressed chiefly black, or of a dark brown colour. And the Blackfeet were more medium in height, of Herculean make, with broad shoulders and great expanse of chest.

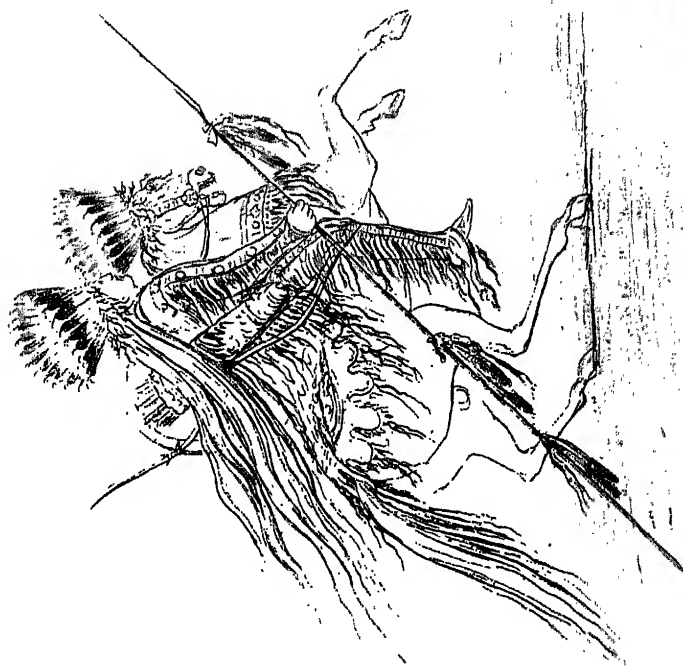
Some of their other remarkable or picturesque features may be quickly summarized. Mention has already been made of their horned headdresses. This was a sign of great honour and distinction. There was, occasionally, a chief or warrior of so extraordinary a renown that he was allowed to wear horns on his headdress, an ornament which gave him a most strange and majestic effect. These were made of the horn of a buffalo bull, split from end to end, shaved thin and light, and highly polished. They were attached to the top of the

The Half-Moon Profile

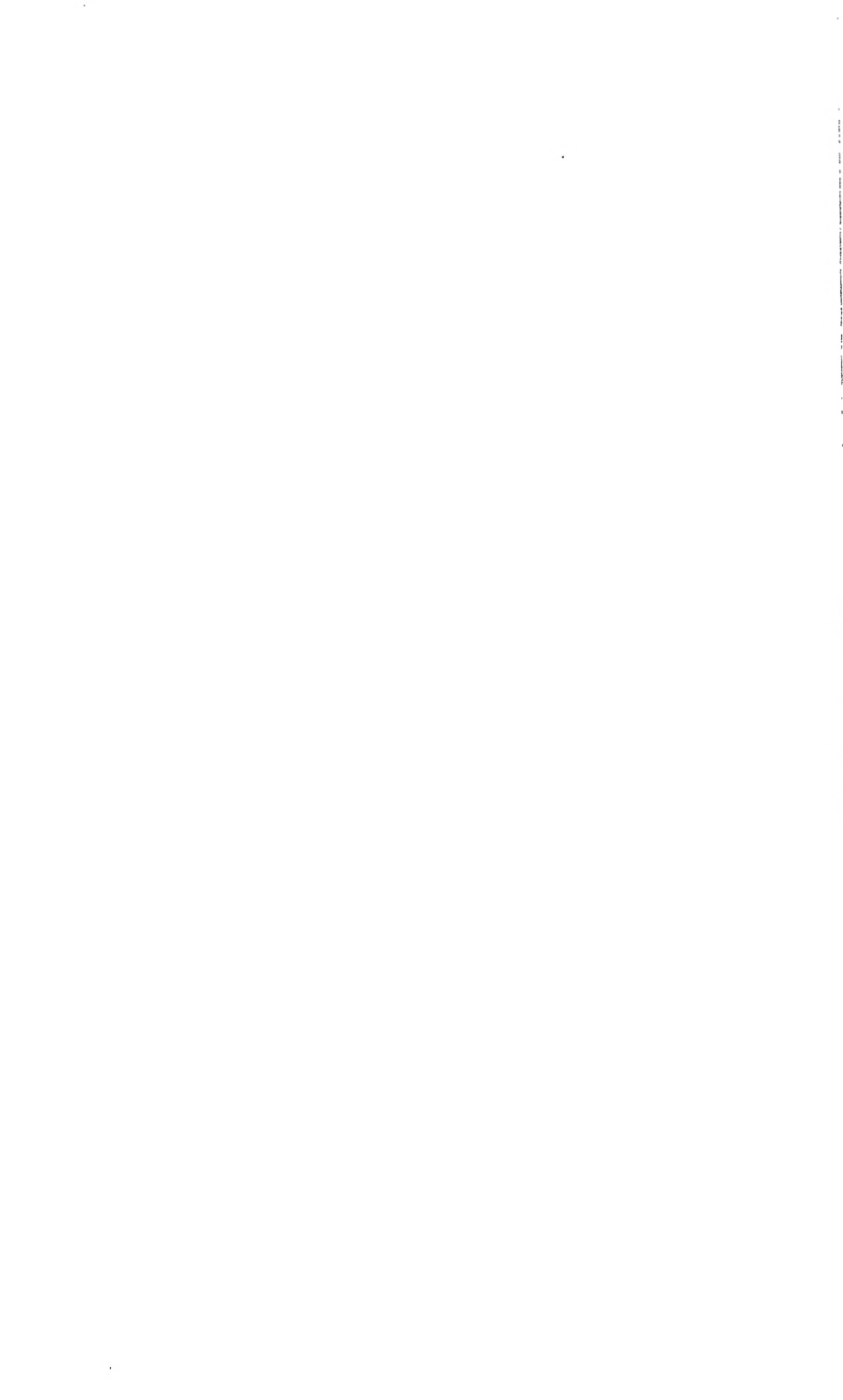
headdress on each side, in the same place that they rise and stand on the head of a buffalo ; rising out of a mat of ermine skins and tails which hung over the top of the headdress, rather in the manner that the long and profuse locks of hair hang and fall over the head of a buffalo bull.

Their headdresses of the plumes or quills of the war eagle reached, as we have said before, from the backs of their foreheads to the ground. It is probable that no more magnificent headdress has ever been invented. But, now, we come to some other most curious particulars that the mention of their head adornments brings into our context. Among the Mandans, there was that peculiarity called by the French *habitants* the *cheveux gris*. In some instances among the women their hair, even in youth, was almost perfectly white. Added to this, there were many Mandans whose complexions were as light as half-breeds, with hazel, grey or blue eyes, so that a stranger in a Mandan village would be first struck with the different shades of complexion and various colours of hair which he saw in the crowd about him, and would be disposed to deny that these could be Indians. But their mode of dressing the hair was to lay it all over from the forehead backwards ; carefully kept above and resting on the ear, and thence falling down over the back and painted red, extending quite to the calf of the leg, and sometimes in such profusion as to conceal the whole figure from a person walking behind them.

We have already indicated the Crows as being distinguished by their great height and their dresses of white deerskin. But they, also, had a form of head peculiar to themselves, the semi-lunar outline of which related them to some of the figures to be seen carved upon the ancient Mexican stone monuments. Nor was this the result of artificial distortion, as in the case of the tribe of Flatheads, whose foreheads are compressed with wooden boards from childhood. It is, therefore, a trait of tribal or national character. Its effect must



CHIEF OF THE CROW INDIANS ON HORSEBACK
drawn by George Catlin



Crow Chief on Horseback

have been most odd to see. No more thrilling or picturesque appearance could be imagined than a party of Crows on horseback, in all their plumes and trappings.

We are given the portrait of a Crow chief mounted upon a wild and leaping horse. His dress was of mountain goatskins dressed to that conspicuous whiteness to which we have referred. His long hair, which reached to the ground while he was standing on his feet, was now lifted in the air and floating in black waves over the hips of his charger. On his head, and over his shining black locks, he wore the universal crest of quills of the war eagles; while his horse's head was adorned with another of equal beauty and precisely the same in pattern and material. A beautiful netting of various colours completely covered and almost obscured the horse's head and neck, extending over its back and its hips, and terminating in a most extravagant and magnificent crupper, embossed and fringed with rows of shells and porcupine quills of different colours.

Other instances are given, besides this, of the natural hair reaching to the ground. The greater part of the Crows cultivated it down to the calf of the leg; while a few were able to make it sweep the earth. Every man in the nation oiled his hair with a profusion of bear's grease, and promoted its growth to the utmost of his ability. Most of the men of the Crows were over six feet in height. They were to be seen in the early morning combing and dressing their hair before the doors of their wigwams. In some cases, a foot or more of it would drag on the grass as they walked, giving an exceeding grace and beauty to their movements.

But the chief of the Crows, who was named Long Hair, had the longest hair of any man in the nation. On ordinary occasions it was wound with a broad leather strap from his head to its extreme end, and then folded up into a budget or block, ten or twelve inches in length, and of some pounds weight;

The Train of Hair

which, when he walked, he carried under his arm, or placed in his bosom, within the folds of his deerskin robe; but on any great parade, or similar occasion, his pride was to unfold it, oil it with bear's grease and let it drag behind him, some three or four feet of it spread out upon the grass, and black and shining like a raven's wing. This extraordinary man was known to several Europeans who had lived with him in his hospitable lodge for many months together. They had measured his hair by correct means, and found it to be not less than ten feet seven inches in length.

Such are the facts given by Catlin of the Crow and Mandan Indians. It should be added that all these tribes spoke languages that were entirely incomprehensible to each other. Moreover, being in a state of perpetual war, they had removed as far away from each other as possible, so that no communication except that of battle or skirmish existed between them. The account given of the Crows and Mandans was written by Catlin in 1832, or shortly afterwards. By 1838, disaster had overtaken them. The Mandans perished utterly and entirely; and since details are given of the death of Mah-tothpa, or The Four Bears, it may be of interest to describe what happened to them. Their means of destruction was the smallpox, accidentally introduced among them by the fur traders. In only two months they all died, except some thirty or forty, who were taken as slaves by their enemies the Riccarees, who lived two hundred miles below them and moved up and took possession of their territory. When the village was attacked by this disease, nearly half of the Indians destroyed themselves with their knives, with their guns, or by leaping head foremost from a thirty-foot ledge of rock in front of their village. The first symptoms of the disease was a rapid swelling of the body, and so very virulent had it become that many died in two or three hours after their attack, and in many cases before the appearance of the disease upon their

Death of Mahtotohpa

skin. Nobody thought of burying the dead. Whole families, together, were left in horrid and loathsome piles in their own wigwams, with a few buffalo robes thrown over them, there to decay, and be devoured by their own dogs.

The death of that great warrior who was our hero but a few pages back, was as follows. He saw every one of his family die round him in his wigwam, his wives and his little children, after he had recovered from the disease himself; when he walked out, round the village, weeping over the final destruction of his tribe. He, then, came back to his lodge, where he covered his whole family in a pile with a number of robes, and wrapping another round himself, went out upon a hill at a little distance, where he laid several days, despite all the solicitations of the traders, resolved to starve himself to death. He remained there till the sixth day when he had just strength enough to creep back to his village, when he entered his own wigwam, laid his body by the side of his family, drew his robe over his head, and died three days later, on the ninth day of his abstinence. Such was the classical death of a superb warrior. Nothing in ancient legend has more of restraint and dignity.

It had been remarked of him by the painter, when he came to have his portrait done, that no tragedian ever trod the stage, nor gladiator ever entered the Roman arena, with more grace and manly dignity. Such would seem to be equestrian or circus qualities nurtured in the tent. The little circle of the Indian village, no larger than the encampment of the fair; the centaur relationship of man to horse; the empty landscape and the smell of battle, which were tantamount to the perpetual moving from fairground to fairground; while the audience represent the hostile force to be subdued and are to be impressed on first sight of them by the circus procession, or by the Crows or Mandans on horseback in all their plumes and trappings; there are so many and such deep parallels

Arrival of Colonel Cody

between the heroic life and its copy or shadow in the nomad theatre. Those persons who can remember the arrival of Colonel Cody in some country town in England will appreciate my meaning. His procession on entering a town, or along the quiet lanes of the country, partook both of the Roman triumph and the Indian campaign. Those Redskins on horseback, or sometimes in a chariot, the baggage wagons and the train of horses, even the circumference of their town of tents, all spoke the passage of a hero, or his actor. He was passing by to new triumphs and would only stay a day, two days. He brought tame lions in their cages. His Redskins were tethered to their weekly pay roll. And yet they carried romance with them. In that field outside the town the wind that blew upon the canvas walls and drummed upon the ropes came, not from the gasworks and the power station, but off the grassy bluffs and from the open plain. In their true world of the prairie the lodge or wigwam had that heroic air which can only be played in mime upon the stage. But the actor can concentrate that action. And Colonel Cody, who was something of a genius, had this power. He presented it in his own person, and in the circus train.

Let us think, for a last moment, of their golden age! It can be an afternoon among the Minatarees. Leaving the town of tents, because you want to cross the river, the chief has sent a woman in front of you carrying upon her head a skin canoe, a boat of buffalo skin stretched on willow boughs. At the water edge she floats it and beckons you inside, stepping before it and pulling it along. She wades towards the deeper water with her back to you, pulling with one hand, and with the other hand, attending to her dress which floats upon the surface till the stream is above her waist, when it is instantly turned off, over her head, and thrown ashore.

She plunges boldly forward, swimming, and drawing the canoe with one hand. In the middle of the stream, a dozen or

Afternoon among the Minatarees

more beautiful girls, from fifteen to eighteen years of age, who are bathing from the opposite bank, surround the canoe, swimming in a bold and graceful manner, as confidently as so many otters or beavers, their long black hair floating about on the water, and their faces smiling up at us out of the wave. They strike out with their legs under the clear blue water, while they catch their hands on to the sides of our boat; sometimes raising one half of their bodies out of the water, and sinking again, like so many mermaids. We place some few strings of beads over their delicate necks, as they raise them out of the water by the side of our boat; after which they all join in guiding our canoe to the shore by swimming by the sides of, and behind it, until the water becomes so shallow that their feet are upon the bottom, when they wade along, dragging us to the shore, as long as their bodies in a crouching position can be half-concealed under the water, where they give the canoe a last push for the bank and, with a loud and exultant laugh, lift themselves for a dazzling moment out of the stream, showing all their bodies from half way to the thigh, and plunge back again into the river.

This tribe, of whom these are the virgin girls, were near relatives of the Crows and Mandans. Their name, the Minatarees, meant 'people of the willows'. Having been cut off, in war or in hunting, from the rest of the Crow tribe, they had thrown themselves upon the mercy of the Mandans and lived in three villages along this river. They were fifteen hundred in number and were established at the far, far end of all the prairie, close to the first bastions of the Rocky Mountains. We take our last look at them, trying to remember every detail, for we shall never come again. The Crow warriors ride past, once more, in their dresses of white deerskin, the most beautifully clad of all the Indians, and bringing from the base of the mountains their fine and spirited breed of wild horses. But, now, their brave figures become dwarfed and

Farewell to the Crows

invisible in the immensity. It is as sudden as if we were taking off into the air. They became mere specks upon the grassy plain. They are gone altogether. They are left behind. The huge campus or field of the prairie shakes or unrolls itself and leads still on.

So enormous were the distances that even the Indians could not find their way. It is for this reason that the adventures of the early travellers are so often tales of horror. The prairie was, at least, open into infinity, but the dreaded forests were, if anything, more fearful. During half the year they were feet deep in snow, and the plains of the buffalo were far behind. The only food was what the hunter could obtain. There were wild berries and salmon in the rivers. But, also, near the mountains, there was perpetual danger from the grizzly bears who would attack a camp in search of food, and never, like the Indians, met their deaths by starving. Probably the blind wilderness, in the sense of endless forest, must always be more terrible than the plain. It is the nightmare of shadows, and of the trail's circle that returns into itself. The nearest human being may be a hundred miles away; and an enemy, at that. Here is a traveller's tale from the waste on the far side of the Rocky Mountains, upon the Thompson river. They were lost in the pine forest, progressing, at the best, no more than five or six miles in a day: no axe mark on a tree, no 'blaze' or broken twig, no remains of an old camp fire, only a solemn stillness, unbroken by note of bird or sound of living creature.¹ 'In the afternoon Cheadle and the boy returned empty handed. The Assiniboine arrived about the same time and producing a marten threw it down, saying drily: "J'ai trouvé rien que cela et un homme—un mort." He directed us where

¹ Quoted from *The North-West Passage by Land: being the narrative of an expedition from the Atlantic to the Pacific* by Viscount Milton, M.P., F.R.G.S., F.G.S., etc., and W. B. Cheadle, M.A., M.D. Cantab., F.R.G.S., London, 1865.



THE HEADLESS INDIAN

The Headless Indian

to find the dead body, which was only a few hundred yards from camp, and we set off with the boy to have a look at the ominous spectacle. After a long search we found it at the foot of a large pine. The corpse was in a sitting posture, with the legs crossed, and the arms clasped over the knees, bending forward over the ashes of a miserable fire of small sticks. The ghastly figure was headless, and the cervical vertebrae projected dry, and bare: the skin, brown and shrivelled, stretched like parchment tightly over the bony framework, so that the ribs showed through distinctly prominent; the cavity of the chest and abdomen was filled with the exuvia of chrysales, and the arms and legs resembled those of a mummy. The clothes, consisting of woollen shirt and leggings, with a tattered blanket, still hung round the shrunken form. Near the body were a small axe, firebag, large tin kettle, and two baskets made of birch-bark. In the bag were flint, steel and tinder, an old knife, and a single charge of shot carefully tied up in a rag. One of the baskets contained a fishing-line of cedar bark, not yet finished, and two curious hooks, made of a piece of stick and pointed wire; the other, a few wild onions, still green and growing. A heap of broken bones at the skeleton's side—the fragments of a horse's head—told the story of his fate. They were chipped into the smallest pieces, showing that the unfortunate man had died of starvation, and prolonged existence as far as possible by sucking every particle of nutriment out of the broken fragments. He was probably a Rocky Mountain Shushwap, who had been, like ourselves, endeavouring to reach Kamloops, perhaps in quest of a wife. He had evidently intended to subsist by fishing, but before his tackle was completed, weakness—perchance illness—overtaken him, he made a small fire, squatted down before it, and died there. But where was his head? We searched diligently everywhere, but could find no trace of it. If it had fallen off we should have found it lying near, for an animal which had

The Gnawing of the Bones

dared to abstract that would have returned to attack the body. It could not have been removed by violence, as the undisturbed position of the trunk bore witness. We could not solve the problem, and left him as we found him, taking only his little axe for our necessities, and the steel, fishing-lines, and hooks as mementoes of that strange event. We walked back to the camp silent and full of thought. Our spirits, already sufficiently low from physical weakness and the uncertainty of our position, were greatly depressed by this somewhat ominous discovery. The similarity between the attempt of the Indian to penetrate through the pathless forest—his starvation, his killing of his horse for food—and our condition, was striking. His story had been exhibited before our eyes with unmistakable clearness by the spectacle we had just left: increasing weakness: hopeless starvation; the effort to sustain his waning life by sucking the fragments of bones: the death from want, at last. . . . The Indian had started with one advantage over us; he was in his own country—we were wanderers in a strange land.'

Another episode from the same book will give the character of the scene and time. It concerns a party of five Canadians who obtained canoes from Kamloops to descend the Fraser river. 'The Shushwaps had informed us that they had discovered the canoes lying bottom upwards, and their property strewn along the shore, below some rapids, and believed that the whole party had been drowned. But three of their number met with a more horrible fate than this. We now learnt that in order to shoot the dangerous rapids with greater safety, they had lashed the two canoes together; but in spite of this precaution the boats were swamped. Two of the Rennies succeeded in reaching the shore, and the other three men a rock in the middle of the stream. For two days and nights the latter remained exposed to the bitter cold of the commencing winter, without a morsel of food, before their companions

The Gnawing of the Bones

were able to effect their release. A rope was at last passed to the rock, and the men hauled ashore, half-dead with hunger, and fearfully frost-bitten. They were so helpless as to be quite unable to proceed further, and the two Rennies, having cut a quantity of firewood, and given them almost the whole of their scanty stock of provisions, set out on foot to seek assistance at Fort George, which they calculated on reaching in six days. But they had underrated the distance; their path lay through dense encumbered forests, and the snow had fallen to considerable depth before they reached the Fort, frost-bitten, and almost dead from hunger and exhaustion, after twenty-eight days' travelling. Indians were immediately sent out to the assistance of the unfortunate men left behind, but returned in a few days declaring the snow was too deep for them to proceed. Other Indians, however, discovered the party some time afterwards. Helstone and Wright were still alive but, maddened by hunger, had killed Rennie.¹ When they were found they had eaten all but his legs, which they held in their hands at the time. They were covered with blood, being engaged in tearing the raw flesh from the bones with their teeth. The Indians attempted to light a fire for them, when the two cannibals drew their revolvers, and looked so wild and savage, that the Indians fled and left them to their fate, not daring to return. The following spring, a party of miners, on their way to Peace River, were guided by Indians to the place where these men were seen by them. The bones of two were found piled in a heap, one skull had been split open by an axe, and many of the other bones showed the marks of teeth. The third was missing, but was afterwards discovered a few hundred yards from the camp. The skull had been cloven by an axe, and the clothes stripped from the body

¹ The narrative is confused. We have just been told that the Rennie brothers had set out on foot to seek assistance; but we give the account verbatim.

Indians in Yellow Ochre

which was little decomposed. The interpretation of these signs could hardly be mistaken. The last survivor had killed his fellow-murderer and eaten him, as shown by the gnawed bones so carefully piled in a heap. He had, in turn, probably been murdered by Indians, for the principal part of the dead men's property was found in their possession.'

This pair of travellers from whose narrative we are quoting, before crossing the Rocky Mountains had passed through many of the countries visited by Catlin thirty years before. Here is their description of the Blackfeet Indians, met with at Fort Pitt, upon the Saskatchewan, not far from Edmonton. The Blackfeet braves wore scarlet leggings and blankets, abundance of ribbons in their caps, or the hair plaited into a long queue behind, and two shorter ones hanging down on each side of the face and bound round by coils of bright brass wire; round the eyes a halo of bright vermilion, a streak down the nose, a patch on each cheek, and a circle round the mouth of the same colour. Indeed, the faces of both men and women were highly painted with vermilion. The dress of the latter was very singular and striking. It consisted of long gowns of buffalo skins, dressed beautifully soft, and dyed with yellow ochre. These were tied in at the waist by a broad belt of the same material, thickly studded over with round brass plates, the size of a crown piece, brightly polished.

A few years later, their dressed deerskins and the Indian embroidery of dyed moose hair and the coloured quills of porcupines had gone from them. With the coming of the white man the Indians bartered their furs away for cheap glass beads, and the simple geometric figures of their designs were changed to more elaborate floral patterns. Their squaws, this has been noticed by so many travellers, could be mistaken easily for Gypsy women. Probably all nomad women have points of identity together, as much as tramps, wherever met with, are an universal race. It is the confraternity of those

Squaws

who dwell in tents ; and is found among the Bedouin women, in Tibetans and Mongols of the high plateaux, and in the circus camp. It is the type, too, of the Cockney costerwoman. The tendency is that, owing to the winds and cold, they should always be overclothed. Heat, they ignore : or, even, their protection against it lies in excessive clothing. Shawl or blanket is the unit of their costume, and it is probable that they will wear heavy jewellery and many skirts or petticoats, one upon another. You can tell a nomad woman by the black locks of her hair and in her tawny face and hands. There is, as well, the characteristic walk or stride, often to be noticed in the outskirts of a town. The Gypsies approximate to the Red Indians in their women but, not their men.

They are the Redmen or Redskins. This is no effect of wind or air but their natural pigment, betraying, immediately, that they are another race. The Redskins, the Peaux-rouges, often, in such tribes as the Iroquois, stripped naked for battle and made hideous with war paint. Or dressed only in their deer-skin trousers, naked from the waist upwards to the shaved cranium, bare save for the scalp lock, their pride and their enemy's ambition, with always, the Indian insignia of the eagle's feather. More especially, their shaved temples gave to them a peculiar appearance or, as it were, a lunar outline, the whole face and head being hairless to behind the ears. Added to this, their features were nearly always aquiline and bespoke the warrior. That they were proud or sensitive of their own colour is proved in the choice of vermilion for the bars and blotches that they daubed upon their skins. In result, it was as though they had been rubbed in blood. They affected, also, a livid shade of green, which, round the mouth or on the stubble of the beard, made them appear like messengers of death. Each separate tribe, had, of course, its vital differences in paint and costumes. It has been estimated that the Red Indian population of North America, including Canada, in

The Rustling of the Plumes

fact, of all America lying north of Mexico, amounted, at most, to a million or a million and a quarter, but the measure of their variety will be realized when it is stated that fifty unrelated linguistic stocks and seven hundred distinct dialects shared this immense region. On an average, therefore, each of these dialects was spoken by not more than two thousand persons. Of all the aboriginal inhabitants of the American continent it would be possible to remark, in truism, that in as much as silk may be the characteristic mark of the Celestial, or woolly hair of the negro, so the use of plumes and feathers is that which puts apart or distinguishes the American Indian.

We have to think of the noise made by the warriors of Catlin. By some curiosity of inappreciation he does not mention this. But the approach of Mahtotohpa as he came through the door of the wigwam with his 'firm and elastic step' will have been accompanied by a most extraordinary rustling and undulation of his eagles' quills, opening and closing behind him as he walked, his whole headdress from the back of his forehead down to his feet appearing to dilate, as though a pair of mighty wings was fixed to his shoulders. As he stood for his portrait, every smallest movement made that quivering sound. He had alighted out of the winds, and indeed, the feel and weight of the feather fabric that he wore must have become a part of him, so that his tread was conditioned to it. He is in such contrast to the men in iron of our middle ages, while it could be remarked of his panoply that all is to create terror, or in order to appear magnificent. Nothing is defensive. It is all in pantomime; but his plumes are as light as air and do not impede him. We would hear, also, were it given us to do so, the twanging of his bow, which was of bone, as white and beautiful as ivory, perhaps of narwhal tusk come by barter from the far Pacific, but of which the warrior, himself, knew not the secret of its origin. Its

Pueblos

string, three stranded, was twisted out of deer's sinews, and in the words of Catlin had twanged and sent the whizzing death to animal and human victims. We may account it for a wonder, and a symbol, that this archer of the endless prairies and forests should have a headdress and two wings of feathers. We would have heard him, too, as he passed by on horseback like a soaring eagle in the open air. His arrows were feathered with the white swan's quills, and his robe was the skin of a white buffalo, which was the greatest rarity in the country of the bisons, there being, perhaps, in their vast herds not one in an hundred thousand that was white. But enough of Mahtotohpa!

We come down south to the Indians of the Pueblos. As the climate changes and the snows are left behind, so the human shape alters. Here are dry wastes and the tremendous cliffs and canyons. First come the Navajos, who are nomads, of Arizona and New Mexico, famous for their woven ponchos, or shoulder blankets, which until lately were patterned in broad stripes, for their pottery, and the abstract sand paintings upon their floors. The Navajo women could be mistaken for nothing else than Gypsies. Far away and unknown, are the feathered Indians of Catlin. Plumed caciques are another mystery, to the South, and near the tropics. The modern Pueblos lie near the Rio Grande, in New Mexico. Among them are Zuni, and the Taos of D. H. Lawrence. Much has been written, and too many pictures painted, of the Indian dances and the ceremonies of Taos. What is more interesting is the ancient Pueblo culture, for this was alone and isolated between the Red Indians and the Aztecs, both of them mysterious in themselves, but this, more strange still and, in a sense, inexplicable.

The great period of the cliff dwellers was from 1100 until 1400 A.D. Most of the Pueblos, that is to say, were deserted for some hundred years before the coming of the Conquis-

Pueblo Bonito, in New Mexico

tador. When the Spaniards reached them, in 1540, in the expedition under Vásquez de Coronado, no gold was found, there was fierce resistance from the Indians, and they were left undisturbed again for many years, until, in fact, late in the seventeenth century there were a couple of rebellions of the Pueblos, a proof that the Spanish settlers were increasing and had made contact in the canyons. That first experience of the Pueblos, in 1540, is chronicled by Pedro de Castañeda, from whose account it is obvious that the towns described were the equivalent to Zuni and to Taos. But the Spaniards, themselves, and later, the first American settlers of a hundred years ago, had begun to discover prehistoric cities built to peculiar and communal plan. As late as 1888 two cowboys found the mysterious Cliff Palace, in Colorado. The huge, flat tableland of rock has a ledge or crevice some hundred yards in length, a fissure or, as it were, a pocket, which is entirely sheltered by the overbeetling rock above. It could only be entered by a secret passage through the cliff. This strange dwelling had 146 rooms in it, long deserted, and will have held six or eight hundred inhabitants living in houses built of mud or adobe, carried down laboriously through the secret tunnel, a discovery which, in its persons and its circumstance, is more exciting than any fiction.¹

Pueblo Bonito, in New Mexico, may have been the most remarkable of all such structures. An apartment house, four storeys high, in the Gran Chaco canyon, with eight hundred rooms and a population, therefore, of as many as five or six thousand inhabitants. But a dwelling, according to reproduction, of peculiar shape, an adobe agglomeration some quarter of a mile in length, like a gigantic floating dock, or those cement harbours which have been discussed as half-way stations for Atlantic flights. Its square windows, in four

¹ This district was set aside as Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado, in 1906.

The Kachina

decks, could be the portholes in that concrete sea wall, which is straight for one side and curves in bold ellipse, like a bastion, at both ends. The top of those great walls are left smooth to walk on; while the interior, seen from above, is a succession of terraced roofs, a curious feature being the protruding ladders, of which the tops emerge from a number of circular pits or wells, dark patches of shade in this cold but blazing landscape. These dark orifices are descents into the Kivas or ceremonial chambers. It is from these that the masked dancers climb. Down below their secret rituals are held. The Kiva has been described as a primitive planetarium, the roof and walls being the firmament and the floor representing the earth. A small hole in the floor stands, in symbol, for the entry of mankind into the world. Other openings have wooden planks upon them, on which the dancers stamp so that the underworld will hear them. Chief of their ceremonies will have been the Kachina cult, in its main purposes a rain festival, the Kachinas being ghosts or supernatural elements always personified by giant maskers, wearing costumes that are wonderful creations of the savage mind, abstract forms of terror, such as the arts of direct representation can never attain to. There are, as well, serpent dances, and fire dances; but the masked figures seen climbing out of the pits are, more often, the clowns or comedians who play a strange part in the ritual and are allowed to parody its most sacred moments. Like clowns or augusts of the circus they mimic during the intervals with the function, exactly, of the clown who imitates the conjurer, his purpose being to prove that the magic is not in him and by parodying the apparent simplicity of the act prove the sacred nature of the office. They exhibit both sides of the ritual to the spectators, while their humour, which is obscene, is so much anthropomorphic evidence of the god-head, preparing the mind for acceptance that the gods have physical being and human intelligence.

Ghost of the Skyscraper

This emergence of the masked dancers is followed up the ladder, by that of a pair of Kachinas, who climb slowly into the light, toppling and awkward in their gigantic masks of feathers. Not clowns, but carnival 'bigheads' of the gods themselves, who had stumbled in the pit beneath among the poncho'd audience, moving against the striped colours and the sand abstractions upon the floor. They are watched in an awed silence by the Indians upon the roofs and towers of the Cliff Palace, the Mesa Verde, that ledge or crevice town in the tableland of rock; or from that raft or adobe island, Pueblo Bonito, in the Gran Chaco canyon. Such, too, are the storeyed towers of Taos, in their hard colours in the wind and sun. For these, all, are communities of the Pueblos. If the Red Indian, Aztec, Maya, Inca, have all perished, the Pueblos are still existing and can be known in Taos and in Zuni, in other towns, as well, but those two are chief of them. All pales, though, before Pueblo Bonito. The stupendous colours of the desert make more strange this communal or apartment city in the wilderness. And, in the same way that Indian is a false term for those agriculturists, as for any or all of the American aborigines, but has never been changed or improved upon, so, a community dwelling, like Pueblo Bonito, is ghost or harbinger of the skyscraper and the tenement apartment. It is their tenuous, shadowy substance, in some connection with plumes and feathers being the silks or cottons of the crypto-Indies, that makes the thought of them and their reality, whether Redskin warriors, the true Red Men, or the flowerlike and docile, ever improbable and unreal, removed from history's perspective and, even, named in mistake and misconception. They are not Indians: but Red Indians: Maya, Toltec, Aztec, Inca; chocolate drinkers, smokers of tobacco, men of gold and of the silver ingot: but never more a race apart, a separate creation, than in the cliff towns and the cities of the canyon. This is no Kasbah of the High

The Golden Corncob

or Anti-Atlas : not haphazard and, therefore, picturesque, but communal and deliberate, as careful as a prairie city built to the grid-iron plan with its city blocks and streets at right angles, a ghost out of the yellow desert in prophecy of what was to come.

Their cereal was maize, or Indian corn, by its name a substitute or shadow harvest. The mock-Indians could have no notion of our golden August. They did not reap : nor bind the nodding sheaves. Instead, the corncob was their emblem, shaped like the wasp or wild bee's nest that hangs from the rocks, a stalactite of honey hidden in a waxen tenement, another town of cells and regular compartments. The pods of the corncob could be numbered in their tiers and storeys that diminish. It has not the abandon of the oats or rye, the golden nations of the corn that are prodigal and perish in a morning. Yet they store the maize ; and the cobs hang in their hundreds, side by side, the Indian cornucopia ; the cone of plenty, like a golden frieze, a gilded cornice upon the plain surfaces of the Pueblo. To see a string of corncobs hanging above a square doorway, or over a window, is to know the poetical imagery of this unreal land. It is the legend of the golden cacique ; and, holding in their hands sceptres of nar-whal ivory from the far Pacific which taper but are twisted like a barber's pole, we would watch the cacique and his women in their crowns of feathers, a bright bird upon the wrist, in golden buskins, sipping the foam of chocolate through a gilded reed, then, handed by their slaves little canes, highly ornamented, of liquid amber and tobacco, and, smoking a little, lie down to sleep ; while, near by, a huge aviary of every kind of bird lulls the midday with flutings and with raucous cries, birds bred for plumage, that are stripped of their feathers at the proper season for the royal mantles, and it is here that the ornaments of green plumes are made. All round are fountains, fruit trees, and the play of waters. A fantasy in a golden grove inspired by the corncob.

Cactus Land

In Pueblo Bonito, what would be the familiar sights and sounds? The Indians of these small communities, self-contained, and living together for protection against their hereditary enemies, knew no more than a rumour, a whisper from mouth to mouth, of golden Mexico. They never travelled from their territory to another. Its tones of red and yellow, its great skies and clouds were ever before their eyes.

It is the land of cactus. The organ cactus grows its fluted cylinders higher than their houses: while the candelabra holds its branched candles in the blue air above their roofs. There are cacti of which the fruit tastes different at midday and at dawn: which allay thirst and hunger, or are aphrodisiac, or intoxicant: or assuage bleeding and are astringent: of which the blossoms are as a golden shower, the lluvia de oro: or twenty thousand in number and the size of tulips: blooming once in a hundred years: never found growing on the north side of the stem (the pitahaya), its white flowers devoured by the multitudes of humming birds and by the guacamaya, or macaw, who comes from great distance to see the cactus in flower and what the harvest will be, flies off to the coast, but comes back unfailingly in June when the fruit has ripened: down to the creeping cactus, the turtle of the plains, with leaves or pads like flippers thick set with spines, the humblest being often the most beautiful in blossom: creamy white, like vanilla: purple, in reds and scarlets, in the white of the yucca, and in a hundred yellows. We call it cactus land. The cactus is their pine wood: their prospect of the vineyard and the olive grove: their hopfield that, passing by, presents the quincunx: their papyrus swamp, for it can make them paper: it gives them food and drink and roofs their houses: they go on pilgrimage to obtain its drugs: the fruits are their sweetmeat, or are eaten, stewed: it gives them pulque, mescal, and tequila, fiery intoxicants, gin or vodka of the Pueblos: all from the cactus which can bear a semblance,

Sounds of the Pueblos

or be the prototype, to man. A cactus god can be readily imagined, for its rudimentary or ape-like limbs can be seen in abstraction of human image, and every cactus could be an idol. They dwell in a world that is full of statues, and grasping them despite their thorns or spines, the Indians eat or drink of them, part of the miracle being their ease of reproduction. The cactus is as a lizard or a scorpion that can lose its tail and grow another: like those primitive forms of life which can replace their missing organs, or the ends join together and coalesce again. It is only necessary to plant a joint or section of cactus in the ground, and the plant will grow again from that. Cactus and corn are familiar vegetation of the Pueblos. They grow, as well, some forms of gourds and marrows.

What of the sounds of the Pueblos? There is no lowing of the herds. They have no horses, sheep or goats. In that dry air of the desert, which never changes and is a thousand years ago or yesterday, this is the difference. So that they are not peasants. They are peons. It is easy to hold their possessions in community; and one man's personal belongings may not come to more than a blanket or two and some earthen pots. Yet their ant-like industry has contrived this apartment house of the size of a small town, while, at least, the fact that it is the work of their own hands puts them into another category from the inhabitants of a block of flats in a modern city, who have, personally and directly, nothing whatever to do with the telephone, radio, electricity, which are the proofs of their civilization, beyond the use of them, and payment upon the instalment plan. Remove the gadgets, as they are so rightly called, taking away those things to which he has not direct access with his hands, and there is little to distinguish the city worker above the humble peon. But the absence of all pastoral sights and sounds keeps the peon within the walls of the pueblo. His craft was basket making, or the weaving of the ponchos. There are painted pots; while the hanging corn-

The Turkey Cock

cobs bring, as it were, the poetry or the gilding into his communal life. He has no far fields, or distant pastures. Pueblo Bonito, like an ironclad or a coral reef, is an entity to itself. There were only the cotton lands from which they wove their cloth. It was not for many hundreds of years, until the sixteenth century, that sheep were brought in by the Spaniards. Their early weaving was with yucca fibre and coarse cotton. It is this animal silence which distinguishes the Pueblo, if we visit it a thousand years ago upon an arid morning.

A towering sky, higher into the empyrean than in any other land, and like all Mexico, lively with white clouds. To this, Greece or other lands of linear form would have imputed immortal gods and goddesses, but the clouds move too swiftly. All else is static in this ancient land. It is the desert of the tomb; a land where night is silver and day is as the voice of a lion. Yet silent: save for the barking of the coyotes, or wild foxes. But Pueblo Bonito: or, stranger still, Mesa Verde or the Cliff Palace, have one domestic noise which is their cockcrow. It is the gobbling of turkey cocks. This bird which, to ourselves, comes from the Orient and might in the uncertainty of old travellers' tales be more distant than its name suggests, and could be Indian or Far-Indian, is indigenous to America and had for many hundred years been domesticated in the Pueblos. We have to revise, in this, our notion of its Indian sound. It is no abstraction of an Eastern marketplace, but native to the Pueblo, the peacock of the mock-Indies, for it is this in magnificence and not a barndoor fowl: nothing in its youth, but when it shoots the red, and struts and gobbles, when we hear the rattle of its quills, when it treads up and down, threatening, apoplectic, flicking together the feathers of its fan, then the turkey, bronze or copper, or snow white, is splendid as a peacock and more martial, not the bayadère of the forests, crested and feminine, but the red-necked warrior upon the house wall.

Turkey Vulture

See him strut up and down as level as a brigantine, in all the pride of his erected plumes, with a noise as though his tail feathers were vanes or slats working together with the wind in them, turning, at the end of his beat, and setting them, as he bears down again! His bald head, which is red and purple, as if shaved for battle, his vinous neck and wattle, have something of the squid or polyp and somewhat of an eagle. It is no surprise that there should be in North America a turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), figured in Audubon, of which the beak and neck, and the naked, red skin of the head much resemble *Meleagris gallapavo*, the wild turkey. It would not be extraordinary, were it true, that the turkey had become a carrion bird. But *Cathartes aura* is a vulture, not a turkey; his wings, which have a six-foot spread, and his plumes are rather black than bronze. He has no peacock tail. He is no *Meleagris gallapavo*. He has not the gobbling cry; but patrols, alone and solitary, like the condor. Whoever meets with a turkey cock in the Pueblo, now or a thousand years ago, must feel that America has lost what could have been the pheasant or the paradise bird of that continent. Birds of paradise are mere crows, transformed; and look to what travesties the pheasants go! Nature has not allowed to the turkey cock those opportunities that could have made him surpass the toucan or the macaw. In the dry desiccation of the Pueblo he is seen in all that he developed to, and he remains a turkey, not a peacock, nor a golden pheasant. We have to accustom our minds to the fact that his native air is Mexican. His gobbling, gobbling, in so far as it had a human background, is heard in the Pueblo.

How far this is from the maple woods and the giant caribou! It could be the Mediterranean to those distant lands: and this would be Provence, sloping to Spain and Italy, the feathered Indies, lands of art and science. Their plumes are not the eagle's quills, but sewn cloaks or mantles which, at another

Arts of the Pueblos

time, we will touch with our hands. Here, nothing is known of this. In the Pueblos they have rumours of a land of mathematics, where the numbers rhyme, which is to say, an architecture that is regular, straight streets and pyramids of correct alignment, the tallying of time cycles by the courses of the stars. In short, a country of magicians, for their arithmetic blossomed into stone monuments and sculptured stelae. No shadow of this in the Pueblos. Their art was in colour and in rigid lines, of tribal significance, as it might be the markings of a whole race, the nation of the magpies; or hoopoes, dove grey and cinnamon, with barred wings and tufted crest, some rare tribe of conspicuous colouring, all alike, but seldom seen. This, indeed, is true of all folk art; and according to whether it is done by men or women and for which sex it is destined, where it is a question of their clothes, we get the parallel between such groups of human beings and the animal creation. All of it, the whole expression, belongs to that one tribe, being part of their tradition and their household magic, growing little by little and imperceptibly, as though its total, its whole circumference was upon the increase, and dwindling in the same way until it quite dies out.

In the Pueblos, intermarriage and small numbers had made the pattern more violent because of the small circle in which it was confined. Dwellers in the Cliff Palace of the Mesa Verde, or in Pueblo Bonito, were in every sense of the term found only in their restricted habitat, as they might be colour forms of some particular flower restricted to one or two localities, a certain meadow, a ledge of rock, or a patch on the moraine. Quickly to be uprooted: but possessed, obviously, of an inherent strength or vitality that had established their dwelling and preserved them for so long. In spite of interbreeding, and a diet which lacked many of the essential things for health, their curious civilization, that of bee, or ant, or beaver, all working for the community, a group soul only

Prophecy of the Americas

made individual by its situation, has survived more than any other portion of the indigenous American world, and may never perish entirely as the rest has done. Also, it is such a curious ghost: the first footprint on the sands, as it could be the first foot to tread that empty continent, when there was no human voice in it, but foreshadowing in its shape the American future that was to come.



Book III

The Oracle of Dodona



Book III

The Oracle of Dodona

It was not enough to seek opinions of the old and wise. Some subterranean answer, a word heard in the thunder, among the leaves, in the swirling of the waters, was more auspicious. For the old are always influenced by their fears or wishes. In antiquity, and down to our own time, it has been so. That is why oracles are first heard by a shepherd or a peasant girl, someone who has questions to ask of life and knows not all the answers. More often, for the same reason, it is in a lonely place. Not many things can still happen to the old man or the crone. The future is closed to them. It is the young who would look for a sign, and to whom the immensity of the subconscious world lies open. So what follows is an account of a visit to an oracle. In the first place to one particular scene, but, afterwards, it will be sublimated in order to include other instances of inspiration or divine fury. Such were the ancient and the modern auguries, but it will not be necessary to look into the entrails of dead chickens. The great sacrifice has come already, and at the holocaust there was thunder or the roar of earthquake as the living victims had their hearts plucked out of them. On our way we may attend upon great rivers from the thickest shade of Indian trees, where an ascetic sits, his lifetime, in a cell of

People of the Level Eyebrows

shadows. That, and much more. But, at this moment, to Dodona's grove. And, for a beginning, let us stop for bread and wine.

At a small whitewashed house, where they will tell you who has passed upon the road. An Archon and his train ; and, the day before him, a certain King who was carried in a litter. The wine comes in an earthen pitcher filled from the goatskin, and we are offered bread and olives. There are a few barndoor fowls, and the landlord and his daughter with the level eyebrows, in one line. Not another house in sight but, already, there are many trees, Olympian glades, the Epirote woodlands of ilex and stone pine descending to an unruffled ocean. Those boughs of resin, even now, are like harps, or instruments of music hung in air to catch the sighings of the wind and interpret them into another tongue. As to the ilex, its dark leaves are sibilant. It speaks in whispers of no certain meaning, as those leaves of the sorceress blown out from her cave. Its shade is dark within. You can hardly distinguish the glitter of its tawny lips.

This is where the boar runs, and will tear the landlord's garden and his rows of beans. What month of the year is it? We will have it June, of the leafiest shade, when the nights are mysterious with summer lightning and the bright stars that shoot down from the sky are heavenly lovers who come forth from their tents or pavilions before the morning. So it is the sixth month : the purple iris and the pallid iris, both blotched with honey, bloom in the common field. Come, now, enjoy this scented solitude! It is such a noon as may never be again, did we not know of yesterday and of to-morrow. The wood pigeon breaks from the branches, so loud it almost frightens, but then, where it went, we hear the cooing of the turtle dove and it is an ecstasy of peace and warmth. All of nature is an animal thing that purrs or sings with love in a million tongues down to the humble weed.

The White Cloak of Wool

Are there no clouds? The zenith is fathomless and nearly purple. Only a skein or a net of cirrus, far away, like the rilled sands where nude Arethusa walks and wets her feet in the unsullied morning. No more. For this is far inland, and lost in midst of a bucolic plenty. Presently, some persons running like the mountaineers come down noiseless and bare-foot along the stony path. Porters or muleteers returning from the oracle, they will not stop to speak but shout out some words in passing and we have only the impression of their light elastic forms, their long hair flowing on their shoulders, and their features which are so constantly regular as to be monotonous. They are on their way down to the sea. If we went down with them, we would reach to the shore by sunset and they would lead us to a chamber, fresh woven of the boughs of oak, arbutus, and the myrtle, supported on posts driven into the sand within the sea mark, and open towards the sea. On the wall of our bower a white cloak of wool throws a pale glare upon the woven floor.

It is, in fact, a woven chamber over the ocean; and, all around, they will have made for themselves pallets of green boughs standing on stakes, or suspended on branches to catch the cool currents of the air. Meanwhile, some will be grouped round fires in preparation for the evening meal; others will be bathing. When it is dark the roasted sheep will be carried in upon a wicker tray of myrtle. . . . After this interruption it is Arcadia again; but climbing ever upwards. And now the air is musical with falling water. Here are the plane trees. Their dappled stems and the trembling of a million leaves are concomitant to the noise of waters. It is a light and speckled shade, not dark like ilex. For the plane tree, which is marked like the serpent, already sheds her bark. And there are rocks where the quick goats should be leaping. But it is June, when the flocks feed only on the flowers. We meet no more persons on the rocky path. It is a world of few in-

Olympian Glades

habitants; not even a shepherd's cabin marks the golden meadows.

But the solitude alters. These are the chestnut woods. This is high, towards the Pindus. It is here the wolf comes down, and we climb through an oak forest to where the pines begin, looking back into the vale beneath. It is a dark pine wood and cold, cold, cold; its breath of resin mixed with a choking dampness, half-fungus, half-decay. And so, over the summit, down to the deciduous trees again, to woods where swine would wander, to the acorn and the beech mast trodden underfoot. To where the streams are musical once more.

Soon, how soon, the Olympian glades return. There is no other sound than the lovely sighing in the boughs, except for this summer plentitude of waters, running, singing, chiming, cooler than snow because they do not turn warm upon the fingers. They spring pure from the rocks, virgin, and as clear as the crystal of an eye. We could wander a whole day under the cedar branches and look up into their galleries and chambers, for the cedar is purple or violet in the shadow of its stem, and cedar fragrant, with a floor of rushes which are the cedar needles.

It is lovely to-day and would be no less so in the crocus month. Those are yellow for the sun; white for moonlight; blue for the unflecked empyrean; or striped and veined in subtle changes. In the sound of crocus there are its gay colours, bright as a jockey's cap and sleeves, and the snap of its china stalk growing underneath the trees. Coming up out of the snow, they shine in their bright cups and are the first lights of fair weather. But in that time and place, they are cups of magic, scarce noticed, and in their month as common as the mushrooms. It is vain, on this lovely day, to sigh out for the crocus. For not only is there Olympian beauty; there are Olympian peace and calm. Half the day has gone since the landlord and his daughter. Those are the lights of the setting

The Albanian Capote

sun. It lies golden upon the trees and lawns, for, now, the vale is level ground. The sighing boughs are magical and more magical. We are coming to the oracle.

From this point the personal adventure may be dismissed. It is an encampment in the Epirote mountains, of Albanians, Palicars, or mountaineers. We find ready for us, and that is all, a perfect temple of green boughs, raised high on stakes, with windows on all sides; the walls, roof, and floor of green oak boughs; the floor strewn with fern; and the openings wreathed with garlands of wild flowers; the whole so fresh they seem scarcely plucked an hour. Just such another cell, or little apartment, must have been the earliest temple of Delphi, woven of green laurel boughs. Their arms and rude implements hang upon the trees. So it has always been; and could be, even now, for we are journeying like travellers of a hundred years ago. But, behold this figure! He wears the white burnouse, or benish of the Arabs, over the golden Albanian fermeli, which, under the white skirt or fustanella, embroidered in gold to represent metal greaves, give him the air of an ancient statue, and is the most magnificent costume ever devised. That remarkable cloak is to be known by the three tufts on one shoulder. It is a costume made for the masters of the world. In the meantime sheep are killed, and skins of wine untied. And so farewell to the Palicars! We have come in their company over the mountains to Dodona, and from now, it is neither to-day nor yesterday for the ancient wind is in the boughs.

Dodona, Dodona; the name is two syllables in reiteration, twin labials of a lulling sound, dove-like and of cooing noise, not so much the whispering leaves or murmur of cool waters, for it is more of a lullaby, it is to soothe and send away content; and yet the sound is ominous, for the doves croon even in the thunderstorm, they have no other notes, no hidden stops, their last breath is the one gentle cooing. Do-do, Do-do

Dodona

the beginning of a lullaby, or of a nursery song; but here the name hardens into another syllable; it is a catch or a bird's song turning into a name; and becomes, then, feminine. *Dodona*; and the name dies down, or fades away. But the whole sound of it is sinister, not altogether soothing. In all, the name suggests not so much a grove of trees, but the bird sounds in the branches; and not a song but a call of mysterious syllables that may be differently interpreted; dove, or cuckoo, but not nightingale.

It is curious that there should be this association in its music to the crooning of a dove because the legend tells that the oracle was founded by a dove. Two black doves, according to Herodotus, in the traditions of the Egyptians, took flight from Thebes, in Egypt, one of which flew to the temple of Jupiter Ammon, and the other to Dodona, where, with a human voice, it acquainted the inhabitants of the country that Jupiter had consecrated the ground, which, in future, would give oracles. The oracular power of the doves is further explained by Herodotus. He says that some Phœnicians carried away two priestesses from Egypt, one of whom went to live at Dodona. The legend can be explained, too, by the double meaning of the word *πέλειαι*, which meant 'doves' in most parts of Greece while, in the local Epirote, it implied 'old women'. Whatever the origin of the name, such are the implications of its sound and such the music of its syllables. It is the fact, also, that in later times the oracles were always delivered by three old women, a sort of parody or earthly equivalent of the Fates or Parcae, and it is probable, dressed like them in chaplets made with wool interwoven, in their season, with flowers of the narcissus.

That sacred name falls from the lips and gives the aisles and entrances into the holy grove. But listen again! The sound comes from far within. Yet, in the dark femininity of the name it is the whole wood down to its edges, inhabiting the

Noise of the Doves

entire grove and every bough and all the leaves of it. They are oak and beech trees, never a cypress nor stone pine. Not an ilex, nor a cedar; more of a forest than a wood or glade. This is the sacred grove of the Ancients inhabited for all time by prophecy, and musical with the winds and with the voice of water. But, also, with the songs of the birds among its branches, by night or day, who call in mystery, or show their wings upon the muted morning. Nightingale and wood pigeon; but the cuckoo, also; a mystery, in particular, because of its first call, with no warning, in the month of the narcissus, an Indian bird with all the wisdom of vacuity, of Nirvana, and indeed, it is not certain that this was not the oracle. For the cuckoo is not unlike in flight and colour to a wood pigeon; while the curiosity of its habits, and its long and punctual absences, might suggest to a pagan mind that it came from another world and was witness or messenger sent here by the shades. It does, in fact, come here from another continent and returns, of predilection, to play its imposture in the green boughs that it remembers and the familiar shade. Some years, it antedates the spring by miscalculation, or because it cannot stay its natural courses and must take wing. It is odd to hear that voice of summer before the melting of the snows. And, always, in its false character it has gone before the heat. So often, it can be heard calling where it cannot be seen; and there is but the thrashing of its wings, invisible, and it has flown to hide once more.

But legend says the oracle was a dove or wood pigeon. Let us think that we have slept, all night long, in that arbour of green boughs, tired with the journey, and dreaming, it may be, of a woven chamber of oak, myrtle, and arbutus, lulled by the sea breeze which dashed its waves against the stakes and rocked us in our cradle. How wonderful to have woken in Dodona's grove! And the first sound is the rattle of the wood pigeon. It comes in the cold dawn, and is a prophecy of heat

Dawn at Dodona

and languor. Dawn is the hour of dying; but this is the live-long summer day begun. It is the gurgling or rattling of a little quill, a long continuo which ends suddenly, and then begins again; something of a mystery, for you can hear it on the banks of Nile, far down, close to the Ethiopian fountains, where the Dinka will tell you it is the purring of a lion; and it sounds in summer woods of garlic where the nightingale will sing, close to the forge, deep in the hanging valley.¹ Elsewhere, in June, above the bluebell wood dropping to the waters; or out of the 'Kek,' or Meadow-sweet, looking up under the elms and listening, but no more will happen.

Here, it comes again and again; like water taken up into a reed. In particular a noise of water, a thing played with and that cannot escape, in part a toy, and part, a preparation, a preening or dressing of the quills. And it rattles once more, long drawn and in ecstasy, dying like something mechanical that runs down and stops. It is not the wind of breathing in a flute or pipe, but a crooning or purring that is in the muscles of the throat and in the bird's sharp beak, that ceases for its own contentment just to start again. It is a rehearsal, in image, of hot weather's joys, set off like a spring or trap that is a long time dying; a parable of the pigeon's wings and plumes, her beak that preens upon the leaves and stems, the warmth of her throat with all its airy cells; in notes of water, whether dew or rain, but blown in a reed, a piping or fluting that is held with magic breath, and means high summer.

A little later many other voices call. The whole wood is now in ecstasy at the approaching day. We hear imperious and fiery summonings, and an answer that is no louder than the trembling of the lute string. There are those who keep to their bowers and are serenaded in this summer morning. The nightingales are still singing. For the moon, like a hollow

¹ Forge Valley and the Raincliffe woods, inland from Scarborough, are the most northerly haunt of the nightingale in the British Islands.

Dawn at Dodona

shell or carapace, hangs in the heavens. But deeper notes than the nightingale's are what we hear. Those clamant voices have been lulled through the night and, now, prophesy the dawn. Not like the nightingale, a creature or an elemental who is nothing more than passion, burning like the diamond in a borrowed light, and at his fieriest in utter darkness, a tongue of fire and honey, but a cold flame of no warmth, only of love but of no comfort. To lie awake, listening to the nightingales, is to know their passion, which is fire without heat.

These other voices, now there is no more rattle of the wood pigeon, roocoole and roll, like a rolling of r's deep in their dove throats, and their crooning and cooing, their rolling and roocooling, tell of another world from the cold woods of the nightingale. They are crooning wood pigeons: doves of Dodona. In the distance, out of the grove, they murmur like the waters, like the streams and fountains. But, of these, later, and of the shaking of the leaves. The cooing and roocooling are instinct of Dodona, yet alien, in a sense, as they are of every wood. For it is an Indian tongue, from the Ind of poetry and legend. They have come here like the Gypsies, who were an Indian tribe, and whatever wood they live in they inhabit as their own who were, once, priestesses and took flight from Thebes, in Egypt: signifying, in truth, no more than that it is far-off and hot to suit their swarthinness, in this case the warm, the torrid sound of all their crooning.

Hearken again! and agree if it is not Indian. Not India of the plains, but of the Himalayan vale, the poet's Caucasus, unlikely as that tawny Egypt or the Theban tents, and but a pretext or an excuse for the imagination. It breathes of loves that are beyond our comprehension; of a heat of warm contentment that is heavenly, or in part of heaven; of airy cells that like pipes of an organ swell and roll, and although one dies their number is in augmentation; and now it is the whole wood, the hollow grove, as one throat that croons and coos,

Dawn at Dodona

until another and another, in ecstasy, stops, but to join in on the cooing, crooning. Were they white doves, they would croon in a grove of sandalwood. But these, in the legend, were a pair of black doves and they are still, we must believe it, the spirits of the oracle.

By now, their ecstasy is loud in the whole wood. The sky is all dove coloured, in harmonies and gradations that no words can give, tones that melt into one another like the lapping feathers of a pigeon's throat, so soft and sudden, with changes so exquisite that one would stroke with the fingers what the eyes can scarce believe. The crooning of the doves thrills, and is almost felt, in the colours of the morning. It is as though you could feel it with your fingertips, and its transitions are the cooings of another throat, and another, in a myriad markings. They die, and are born again, before the eyes. All are lapped in the dawn fire, and it might be the golden pencillings, the golden spangles on a wing. There are dove soft spaces, of no cloud, where the colours sing together and the eyes and the ears, almost, stare and listen in wonderment, and look up into the zenith. High up, in the empyrean, the colour of infinity has begun; a million miles away, or just before your eyes.

This holy wood of oracle comes of its doves and wood pigeons. The whole day is nothing but their cooing, crooning. It has been an entire day spent listening to the noises of the wood. The green arbours dressed with oak leaves are the custom of this country place. Not many persons come here. It is a temple in a leafy wilderness; and the servants of the oracle are countrymen who could be swineherds or charcoal burners, to whom, in their loneliness, words were spoken from the boughs. It is rustic simplicity, perpetuated in the Palicars, for which reason we came here in their company; but all else is insignificant beside the crooning of the turtle dove. Not that this is all. For Dodona has its streams and its

The Fountain that Lights Torches

fountain of cool water. To this, even, a special mystery is attached. It goes dry at noon, and from that hour strengthens and runs full at midnight, waning till the following noon, and at the usual hour is deprived of its waters. But the fountain is more curious still, for it has the property of lighting any torch that touches it. This is at the source, where it springs up below an overhanging rock, and there is an opening like a mouth into a shallow cavern, a crevice where there might well be igneous gas, but it is more sensible to suppose that there is trickery in this. The torch will have been made inflammable; or some other deception is practised. It suddenly kindles into flame, and superstition counts this as a miracle. To this extent it is an oracle of fire and water; but air, the other element, is regent of Dodona.

Late in the afternoon there is magic in the air. The fountain has begun its courses: a torch is lit again and again, until that becomes, in itself, almost an intoxication. It is hypnotic in effect, and equivalent to the reiteration of the same note of music, a magic to which most animals and many human beings are susceptible. The variations in the timing of this operation are minor and major changes in the music, and give it rhythm. It is the simplest of hypnotic processes. Every afternoon the oracle begins in this manner, and according to its success, words will be heard, or not, among the leaves. The torches burn steadily, this evening, and it is taken as a sign. Presently, a flute player, and then another, comes along and their piping would enchant the serpents. A drum and a tambourine are heard, but not for long. They move away. Their music is auxiliary, and must not drown the sounds of nature. Already, the frogs have begun to croak; and it is for this reason that the oracle which, anciently, was delivered as well by the murmuring of the waters has been moved to other parts of the grove. No other sound must interrupt the wood pigeons and the shaking of the leaves.

The Fancy of the Columbarians

So let us lull our minds and listen to the turtle doves. It is the noise a dove makes in a cage hung in a sunlit room. The zebra striped; the diamonded or harlequin; or simple white Java, as gentle as black-eyed gazelles. And so to the pigeons. A myriad times over, in the oak trees and beeches of Dodona. Their thrilling, loving crooning puffs up the evening. We spoke of India; but the Orient, or fancy, of the Columbarians comes down from the rock dove. Think, then, of their different sorts, all descendants of the rock dove; selfs, all of one colour, pastel soft; or in the hundred colours of the sky.¹

Beginning, for this is England, with the Almond Tumbler, and its variation into almond splash, yellow agate, red agate splash, and kite (which has a red or fiery glow over and through its sable plumage), all broken forms of the prime colour; down to the whole feathered Tumblers, black, black mottled, red or yellow mottled, and to the long-faced or flying Tumblers, clean legged or with feathered feet, black rose wing, red badge, red rose wing, or black saddle, terms of mystery, as yet, but birds that slip and fall, in formation, with much clapping of their wings, in backward turns or appearing like a falling ball, descending in one bout of spinning, or in treble or more somersaults; Rollers, Mad Tumblers, Tipplers, Twizzlers, the pride of the artisan, who work their 'kits', tossing them one by one into the air, squadrons made up of 'Leaders', 'Skyscrapers', 'Topsawyers', 'Mid-sky workers', flying at great height above the chimneys for an hour, or for a summer evening, every few moments 'going off' like fireworks, falling like spinning balls, then 'catch

¹ Our remarks upon pigeons are derived largely from the two great Victorian pigeon books: *Pigeons: their Structure, Varieties, Habits, and Management*, by W. B. Tegetmeier, with coloured plates by Harrison Weir, 1868. The other authority is *The Illustrated Book of Pigeons*, by Robert Fulton, edited by Lewis Wright, 1874-1876. This latter volume has coloured illustrations by Ludlow, the great delineator of domestic poultry, a master in little, in his way.

The House of the Presbyter

themselves' and climb again, but must not collide with another 'kit', be drifted away by wind, or get lost in fog or snow or sleet or rain, till with a last long roll close to the roofs or chimney pots they come down into their lofts. Beauty of the Baldheads and Beards, short-faced pigeons, and a whole fancy to themselves; the blue Baldhead, in particular, with its white head, white flights and tail, the black bars across its wings, its pearl eyes, cerulean shoulders and iridescent neck: or carriers, with ruby eye cere, and beak wattles growing like a polypus that must be cut back with the knife.

Or bluettes, blondinettes, and satinettes, Oriental Frills of Turkish origin, bred from three colours; the blue laced and the sulphur laced, for predilection, among the satinettes. They were traced by their discoverer to a Greek presbyter, and have a history of two hundred years or more, till, in imagination, we are in old Smyrna of the Levant, and climbing a hill, come to a whitewashed wall shadowed by a fig tree. A negress passes by, unveiled, in wide yellow trousers. This is the House of the Presbyter. We behold it often before we fall asleep.¹

All is white as snow within. The women walk on chioppines or pattens, and have reddened fingertips. Their chintz dresses have designs of flowers, and they wear elaborate head-dresses and earrings of gold and coral from the islands. This richness is in contrast to the snow white walls. But the old priest leads us to his pigeon lofts, where, one by one, he takes a bird upon his wrist, or beckons from the walls and branches. They fly down with their fan shaped tails, which spread open to show the markings, their round eyes in their milk white heads, their milky chests, frilled and tufted, more dazzling

¹ The discoverer of Oriental Frill pigeons, who imported them from Asia Minor to Great Britain in the 'sixties, was Mr. H. P. Caridia, a Greek of Smyrna, who settled in Birmingham, then the centre of the pigeon fancy.

Blondinettes and Satinettes

white, indeed, than milk or snow, white feathers to their feet, all white, unbroken and voluptuous as a virgin snowfield. Their heads are shell crested, like a little hood or peak, they are grouse legged, and some are arrow tipped upon their shoulders. The blondinettes are dark headed, with laced shoulders; or there are the barred blondinettes with bars upon their wings, and each tail feather ending in a mark of colour. Of every hue: red, brown, yellow or sulphur, black or dun, as well as blue or silver: and there are even satin blondinettes with extra pencilling extending to the neck, and black or other spangled blondinettes, down to the hundred variations of the brown or other tipped, and the arrow pointed. Bluettes and silverettes are satinettes with bars instead of lacing. There could be, also, Dominos and Vizors, like satinettes, but with coloured heads or masks: the Oriental Turbit and the Turbiteen, plain headed, or with shell crowns, or crests. It may be this whole family are the most lovely of all pigeons. Night after night, we go for a moment or two into that solemn sunlight, dappled by the fig tree, and move among the miracles of Oriental lacing, preferring, it may be, the white headed, with white muffs and snow white legs, for their white is such a softness and a luxury in that heat, and in that frugal life. Laced wings and snowy breasts are all their wealth. But this vision of white wings must be kept pure until the end. It is the world of gouache or pastel. The shadows of the branches are blue upon the walls. A white moonlight at high noon: a snowy Atlas or Himalaya in an open room. For this interior court is as much lived in as any room. Listen! Oh listen! It is Dodona in a little house, half-way up a little hill. And the pigeons' tails spread out in such regular patternings; they fly up to the boughs, upon the whitewashed walls, they flutter and descend, they hover, or rise up again. Their wings are never still. Nor are their snowy heads. We have come down out of antiquity into this silken



BLONDINETTES
by Ludlow

Bagadais de Nuremberg

present, for it is not long ago, the Turkey of Liotard, and for the Turks and Greeks and Levantines we have bluettes, satinettes and blondinettes. For a few moments. Never more. The court of the Presbyter fills with white wings, in an alarm. We would stay longer, but it is too late. The doves are in the lofts. That warm sunlight brings slumber. The doves' markings are lost in their thousand shadings and gradations. They fade, and are forgotten.

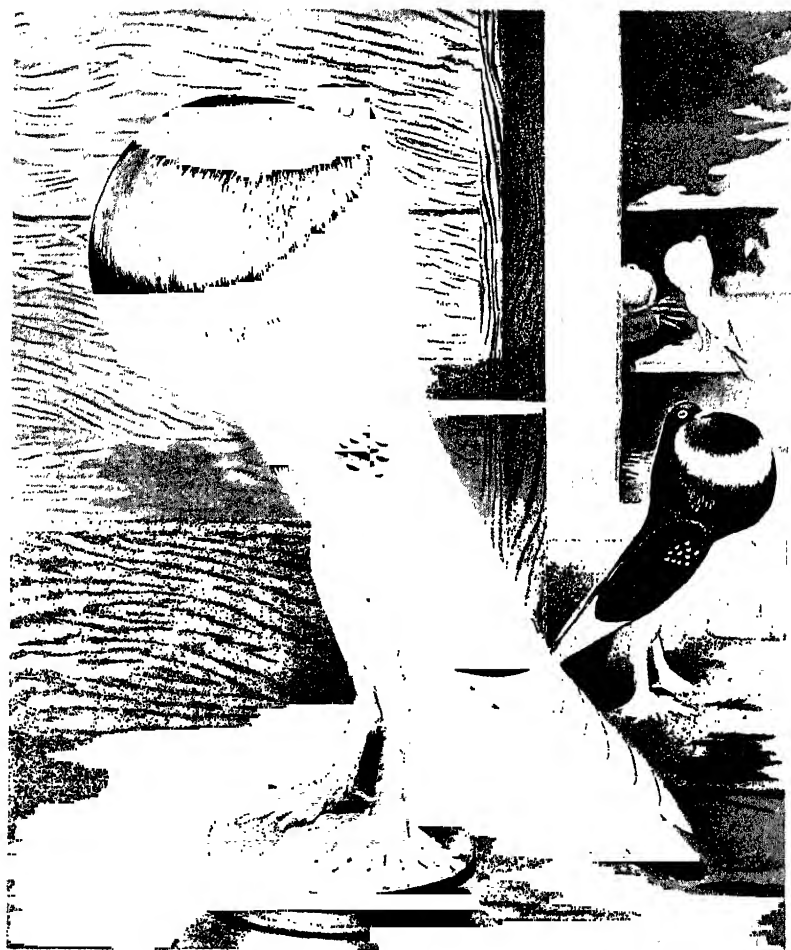
But there are more pigeons of Oriental origin. The Scandaroon, in appearance the cormorant of the lofts; in the sound of its name of Eastern bastardy from Iskander or Alexander; with the curved profile of an Afghan or a Kirghiz merchant; called in Belgium the Bagadais de Nuremberg because it came to them, through that mart of toys, from Baghdad. The hundred doves and pigeons of Celestial fancy, sold in the Peking markets under flowery names, and unknown to the West, with rarest of all, the two sorts that have golden plumage. The African owl, coming from Tunis; and, of their larger parallel, the English owl, the powdered blues and powdered silvers invented by an English fancier about ninety years ago. The former are well described as a very pale silvery blue upon the body, with jet black bars; the head and part of the neck being of pale but more distinct blue, frosted with silver; or as if powdered with flour; or a little like very fine dew or hoar frost on the grass. The powdered silvers being a delicate silver similarly powdered on the head and neck.

Next the Barb, coming as its name implies, from Barbary, North Africa, Meknez or Fez. The oddest of all pigeons, for it is square headed, and in simile somewhat like a ram, its rolled forehead having to either side the enormous circles of the eye cere, round and heavy as two wheels, the beak wattle, and under it, the jew wattle, from which comes the phrase that some Barbs are heavily jewed, all such birds being, in

The Barb, Black and White

consequence, much pinched or dragged in the eye cere. In colour they can be blacks, reds, yellows, duns and pieds. The white Barb, also. Particularly, indeed, the white and black. This most curious pigeon is mentioned by Shakespeare, and is fit bird to walk or fly about Othello's home. The Barb, and, somehow, the name is borne out in its shape and physiognomy. The bird of Moorish Africa, under the flowering almonds in a town of slums, with disease and poverty at the door. A pair of white barbs, snowy as the ibis, but owing to the configuration of their heads, they are, as it were, guardian rams brought from the Anti-Atlas, mountaineers dwelling near to the zellijes, to the tile mosaics, and the cedar beams of Fez. They could be, too, white owls in the raiment of the Moors; but they are more ram headed, and confined as strictly as the shape of their eye cere to this Moorish palace. The black Barbs tell us the mellah, the Jews' quarter, is not far away. Their raven blackness is of the black gabardine; and it is significant that all Barbs should possess peculiarities of feature that impose a comparison with the Jews, not in abuse, but because the Moors and Jews live side by side, and what is not Moorish in these birds of Barbary is of Jewish suggestion. Many of the old Moorish families in Fez have Jewish blood. The black or white Barbs, wherever seen, must be Othello's pigeons, near to the medersa and the mellah. They know the call of the muezzin, the lattice, and the fountain. Bitter winters; and blue skies blossoming with the stork and ibis.

Dodona's grove, where we listen to the wood pigeons, will bring us, too, to Spitalfields. For it was the metropolis of the Pouter pigeon. The silk weavers, many of whom were Huguenots exiled to England, laboured in their own homes and brought their silk manufacture to so high a degree of perfection that, in 1773, an Act of Parliament was passed giving them a book of prices for their work, a monopoly which they



BLACK PIED POUTER PIGEON
by Ludlow

Pouters of Spitalfields

maintained for fifty years, and which let them live in comfort. Such was the occasion for the Pouter pigeon. 'The working out of their beautiful designs in silk', we are told,¹ 'depended entirely upon the skill of the weaver. The nature of the employment required means of relaxation, as the brain as well as the hand was sorely taxed in preparing the looms for new patterns, together with the monotony of the occupation confining them in the house all day, produced the desire for some hobby as a set-off. Whatever they undertook by way of recreation they carried out well. Their gardens were kept in the most exact order; the beds of tulip and ranunculus were simply perfection. Their stock of bulbs, being highly cultivated, and handed down from father to son, increasing in value each generation, were preserved with most scrupulous care.' But their chief hobby was the Pouter. Owing to their prosperous circumstances they could afford the luxury of breeding to the superlative of excellence. It was encouraged in every way. Most of the taverns of Spitalfields had pens fixed in the public rooms for Pouters, where the birds were exhibited throughout the winter months. But, in 1824, the silk weavers lost their book of prices, and foreign competition

¹ *The Pleasures of a Pigeon-Fancier*, by Rev. J. Lucas, London, 1886. This interesting little book, which has an exquisite colour plate of a blue Baldhead engraved by Edmund Evans, is prefaced by a note from John Ruskin, whom the author had attempted to induce to draw some pigeons. Another authority, Mr. George Ure, of Dundee, who bred Pouters for forty years, and imported many of the original stock from Spitalfields, states that the weavers bred, also, poultry, canaries, and small dogs. In this connection it is curious that the black-crested white Poland poultry, now lost, were last heard of in Great Britain, at Portarlinton and Marlborough, the Huguenot settlements in Queen's County founded in the reign of William III. The Huguenots, it would appear, brought their Pouters to Spitalfields and their Polands to Portarlinton. These became extinct in the 'forties during the Potato Famine. Other authorities impute the Auricula to the Huguenots; while this whole question of the pigeon fanciers of Spitalfields compares with the laced Pinks of Paisley. Such domestic arts, for arts they were, formed the recreation of the workers before the cinema and football pool.

Portrait of a Pouter

brought the 'heavy' trade, as it was called, to ruin. Their fortunes declined steadily, and in succeeding years their Pouter pigeons, who were nearing extinction, came into the hands of a few Scotch fanciers. The Scotch Pouter fancy, it has been written, was built almost entirely out of the scattered and ruined lofts of the impoverished Spitalfields weavers.

It is not until a Pouter pigeon has been seen that their peculiarity is to be believed. Their 'blowing' puts them into the category of whale. They are, at once, whale and colour serjeant major; and at the same time, in their tailcoats, and long thin legs down to their feathered feet, something of the dandy or the dancing master. An eccentric, even, of the Parade or Promenade. For their 'cut-away' tails and thin trousers belong to that epoch of the square and crescent. But the Pouter does not wish to walk. He prefers, if that is possible, a wooden pedestal to stand upon. He is static, immobile, once he has filled his crop with air. A bird of ceremony; on duty in the palace, or before the crowd. Impossible not to credit him with self-importance and esteem. He, also, and this is curious, has to be knock-kneed, with his feet turned out a little, and his knees in, not 'cow-hocked', but, as the term goes, 'baker-kneed'. Look at him again! He is, in part, a swallow. His wings are as long and thin as that, but straight, and his tail must nearly touch the ground. He must be absolutely slender and erect, so that a perpendicular line could be drawn from the pupil of his eye to the centre of his feet. As to his globe, it should be as nearly circular as possible, so that his eyes can just see across the top of it. There must be a slight bulge at the back of his neck, and the bib and half-moon must be clearly marked. This latter, with every Pouter pigeon, is a white band, starting below the cheeks and swelling frontally, across the globe, so that it has the shape of a crescent moon, but, as it were, lying near the horizon and swollen in a mist. Another point must be the 'rose', a circular mark

Pygmy Pouters and Isabels

of white dots and splashes upon the pinion, in the exact place where the handkerchief would protrude from his tail pocket. For colours there can be whole whites ; and blue, black, red or yellow peds. Black pied are most admired of all, because of the contrast of their raven black with the white half-moons, white flights, and legs and feet, with some streaks of red or green, or an iridescence of those colours, upon the globe. But reds and yellow peds were, once, the pride of the fancy, in Spitalfields especially ; reds of the deep blood-red that was so much valued, and yellows of a rich, deep hue. Later, when the lofts of Spitalfields were emptied, it was not possible to find as many as a dozen good yellows in the whole country. Both red and yellow peds were nearly lost, and have never recovered to what they were a hundred years ago in London.

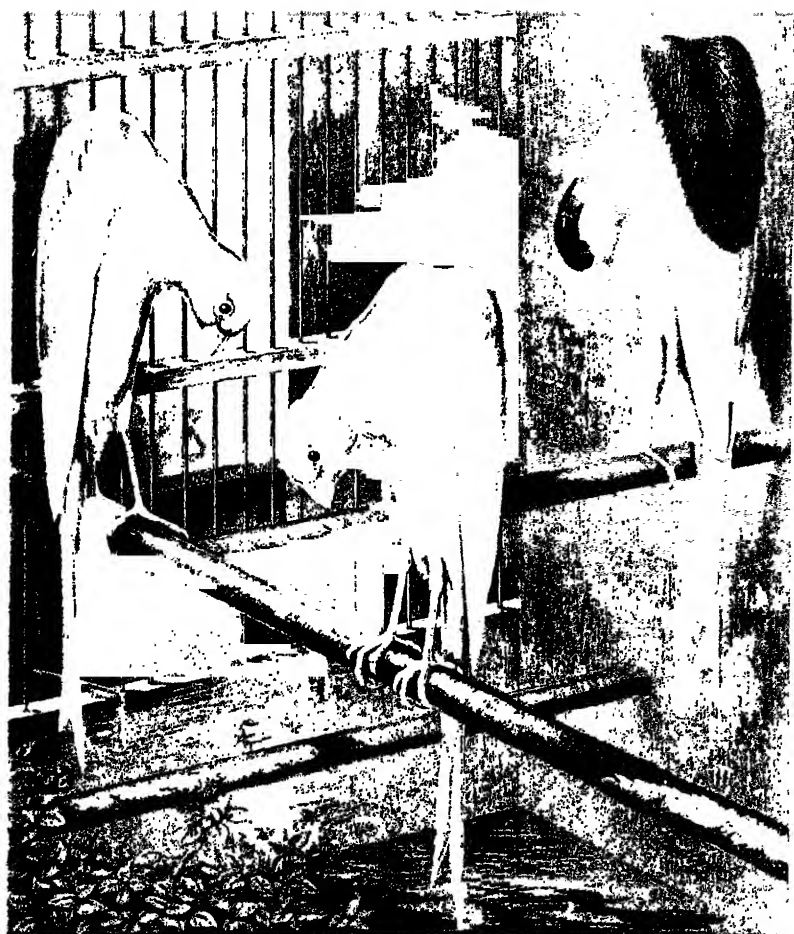
Among the Pygmy Pouters, that are bantams of the breed, and if anything, more characteristic still by diminution, there are more colours to be had. And the sort, too, that are known as Isabels, with white bars across the wing coverts instead of black bars, as with the blue pied Pouters. Isabels can be white, or red, or yellow ; but the true Isabels are cream coloured, like the cream ponies of the Hanoverians that drew the Coronation coach. Other blowing pigeons are the Dutch or Holle Croppers, ancestors of the Pouter, but with a round body and short legs ; Lille croppers ; Brunner Pouters, from Moravia ; and Norwich Croppers. These last have been kept in Norwich for several hundred years, in the same houses and by the same class of persons by whom the Plainhead Canaries were developed, for which the town is famous. The Norwich Croppers are clean legged, without the Pouter's feathered feet, much sturdier than the Pouter, more thickset, and with shorter legs. In the same colours, black peds, and whites and cinnamons predominating ; and in off-colours, cloths, duns, livers, creams, and strawberries. The entire race of 'blowing pigeons' is as curious in stance as the Belgian and Scotch

The Indian Fantail

Fancy Canaries, which stand like an inverted capital L, with their shoulders hunched as much as those of a poet in a caricature, their attitude suggesting, in fact, a sinister gloom or despondency, so that, seeing them for the first time in the exhibition pen, it is difficult not to think of them as dying of a mortal illness.

Quite different is the Pouter. He is puffed out with pride. His long, thin legs and coat tails have that degree of anthropomorphic resemblance which a frog possesses, swimming in a pool. A bird in metamorphosis, inhabited, or animated, by something human. Not imitative of sound, or parrot like, but a bird in human travesty, contriving in the act to look like frog or swallow dressed as a tailor's fashion plate in some tale of fantasy. He is peculiar enough upon his wooden stand ; but Pouters are more odd, still, flying about or fluttering down with their crops distended. The loft or pigeon house becomes enchanted. This is the toy, the hobby horse of Spitalfields, the frog or swallow mannikin of their imagination. Human resemblance among birds has, always, magic in it. Pouters not least. They are an epitome of human pride. In emblem, or parable, for it is a humble pigeon that displays it.

How wholly beautiful are the Fantails! And how is their motion to be described? Shaking and trembling violently, but without a sound, not like the rattling of the peacock's quills ; and with it a motion as though on tiptoe, at moments stepping backward, nearly overbalancing, wheeling round, and coming back to be admired again. They will ignore all else in order to display. Their beaks are deep buried in the feathers of their chests. They can scarcely see. It is a devotion to what must be thought to be their art. For they are temple dancers. The Fantail pigeon came from India. In that great land the peacocks spread their tails and dance for pleasure. But the Fantails are trained acrobats ; and the hens have more carriage and motion than the cocks. They curve back into



BELGIAN CANARIES
by Ludlow



Laced Fantails

position, with their heads below their breasts, treading on tiptoe, no more than a humped globe, seen from in front, ending in a pair of legs, and with the two wing vanes to steady them, nearly trailing on the ground. This little ball or globe of feathers propels itself, this way and that, and will bump into any object, and go on with its dance, avoiding the hand that tries to catch it; or stand on the perch and bend back until it nearly falls. But the prime property is its fan. This must be quite round or circular, and can have thirty or even forty slats or feathers. The Scotch Fantails are distinct from the English, the filaments of the tail feathers being finer and more delicate, all descended from some that came to Dundee in a ship from India a hundred years ago: whereas the English Fantails are bred more for carriage, and the fan has more substance and less finish.

A Fantail, in symbol, is a snow white Fantail. But there are many colours. The black Fantail, with metallic sheen of purple, or of beetle green: reds, yellows, duns, and blues which have black bars upon their wings. Saddlebacks, marked like a turbit on their shoulders, but, in all else, pure white, the saddle being black or red or yellow. Among the selfs, whole-coloured, there are silvers, too, and almonds. Chequers, also, in many colours. And two kinds, each a phenomenon; the crested Fantail; and the laced fans.¹ The crested birds, if only some fancier could improve the crest into a proper tuft of feathers, would be prototype to the great crowned pigeon of the Indian Archipelago. If this crown could be kept snow white, upon the other colours, there would be kings and queens among the dancers in the pigeon loft. Laced Fantails have their feathers loose, or deficient in

¹ J. C. Lyell mentions a fancier in Calcutta who had a breed of glossy green lusted black Fantails, with peaked heads, and feathered legs. Also, reds and yellows, from the North-West Provinces; and in the possession of a doctor in Government service at Dinapore. For J. C. Lyell, cf. *post*, footnote to p. 158.

Progress of the Grand Moghul

webbing, so that their tails are like a fan of ostrich feathers, only that much more delicate and fine. Like feathers in some drawing that is of perfect execution. Incredible and exquisite in detail. Of a particular quality, as it were, imposed upon the ordinary beauty of the Fantail. Of all these pigeon dancers in their various colours it is to be noticed, without exaggeration, that their eyes are different in expression from those of other pigeons, more soft and intelligent, in token that they are trained to please. This and their swanlike necks, are as much in character as their fan of feathers.

It must be insisted that the Fantails are of Indian origin. In both whites and blacks little imagination is required to see this. The peacock and the serpent are of their kin. They belong to that world, whether it be Hindu or Moghul. Of temperate India : not of the great heats. Akbar, the Moghul, was a pigeon lover. Never less than twenty thousand pigeons accompanied his court. Shah Abbas, and the Emirs of Bokhara and Turkestan, sent him presents of rare birds ; and 'his Majesty by crossing the breeds, which was never practised before, has improved them exceedingly'. The regular journeys of the Emperor and his court from Agra to Delhi, and along the Imperial roads from end to end of his dominions, were the spectacle of the age, and as processions, have probably never been surpassed for magnificence. They were composed of a train of thirty or forty thousand persons, all sumptuously dressed in the silks and chintzes, the muslins and palampores of Hindustan. There can never have been such colours on any public highway. Turbans of a hundred forms : among the nobles, diamonds and emeralds and ropes of pearls, treasures of Golconda and Coromandel : horses of Arabian or Persian blood : veiled women in closed litters. It is a vision, an hallucination, to watch them pass. On a leaden evening into the red sandstone city. The fringed tents are no longer needed. Those were pitched, night after night, and camp was struck

Pigeons of Fatehpur Sikri

before the diamond morning. It was a Durbar, a town of linen, tethered down with coloured ropes. The camp of the Great Moghul, in memory of his Mongol ancestry, being descendant of Tamerlane. We see camels, elephants with their howdahs, and rare animals. Falcons on the wrist: flowered silken robes: captive lions and tigers. Wicker cages for the race of pigeons. They ride through an arch of sandstone. It is Fatehpur Sikri.

In those courts there will have been many pigeon dancers. And performing pigeons of other sorts. The white headed Mookee, with its beak of which the upper mandible is white as snow and the lower, jet black; Sherasjees, from Shiraz in Persia; and Lahores. Rollers from Central Asia, the fancy of Bokhara and Samarcand; and Lowtans, which taken up and shaken from side to side, became mesmerized, and when put upon the floor turn somersaults till they are lifted up again. Another breed of Lowtan, to the mere tapping of its head with a fingertip, will roll over and over, and continue, thus, until they die. It is known that in the Emirates of Central Asia, even in the sixteenth century, pigeon breeding had reached to an extraordinary perfection; and these birds, as we have seen, were sent as presents to the Grand Moghul. There is more than a possibility that some of them could be recognized in the albums of paintings made for the Moghul Emperors. Neither the lustre of a pigeon throat, its milk white turtle head, nor the lacing of its wings could be given more faithfully than in those coloured drawings. There were painters who specialized in birds and animals. Pigeons of Aurangzeb or Shah Jehan may be among them, their Central Asian ancestry broken into Indian colours. And, of their number, may be the Fantail.¹

¹ A coloured drawing of a dove by Mansur, the great animal painter to the Emperor Jahangir, 1605-1627, son of Akbar, was offered for sale at Sotheby's in June 1941, from the collection of Major D. I. M. Macaulay. There must, certainly, be other paintings of pigeons by Mansur.

Pigeon Lofts of the King of Oudh

Another pigeon lover was the last of the Kings of Oudh. It will be recalled that Lucknow was capital of these potentates and that, even in India, they were famed for their extravagance. During the latter part of the eighteenth century, and until the Mutiny, they embellished the city with a series of extraordinary buildings, which if our times continue, will be admired, one day. Wajid Ali Shah, the last of them, who built like his predecessors and paved a court with silver, was deposed in 1856 and went to Calcutta, where he lived for thirty years upon a stipend from the British Government of one hundred thousand pounds a year. He had a palace and garden upon the river Hooghly, at the part called Garden Reach, above Fort William. Mr. J. C. Lyell,¹ a famous authority of sixty years ago, writes of him: 'I have seen the pigeonries of the King of Oudh, who is probably owner of the greatest number of choice pigeons in the world, his stock numbering thousands.' This menagerie and garden were one of the sights of Calcutta, though more ignorant comment was given to their size and shabbiness than to the wonders of the pigeon lofts. Some varieties, now altogether lost, will have been there. But the bad odium of the curious buildings at Lucknow, their tawdriness, and their Orient of the pantomime, or of the labels upon chutney bottles, together with echoes of the

¹ *Fancy Pigeons*, by James C. Lyell, London, 1885 (3rd edition). This book is a treasury of curious information, where all sorts of pigeons are concerned. It has delightful coloured figures by the author. J. C. Lyell had lived for some years in India, and among other curiosities he mentions the Laughter pigeons, which came from Mecca, and were imported into India in the sixteenth century, where, under the name of the Kokah pigeon, they were favourites of the Emperor Akbar, because their voice resembled the call to prayer of the muezzin. Lyell was the first to draw attention to the fancy pigeons bred in Turkestan and in China. Of the former, he gives descriptions of thirty-six varieties, of which the skins were brought back from Yarkand by Dr. Scully, in 1875. Some of these will have been Chinese in origin, as Yarkand is situated in Chinese Turkestan, but, in general, the fancy pigeons of the Chinese are still unstudied and unknown in Europe.

The Modena, or Guelph and Ghibelline

Mutiny, in which he had no share, had infected this palace and garden upon the Hooghly. It is, therefore, unknown, in detail, what its pigeonries contained, although so near to Calcutta, and existing until as recently as 1886.¹ But, apart from the markets of Peking, this was the last opportunity to see living specimens of what the skill of the Orient could accomplish. The varieties of fancy pigeons bred in China have never been explored: it is probably too late, now, that China is in chaos. Those of India have been, mostly, lost. It is only Turkey and the interior of Asia Minor that were searched for Turbits and Oriental Frills. Their discoverer, who is named in our footnote upon page 147, imported in all some two hundred and fifty pairs of birds, apart from his own collection; and, in doing so, emptied most of the lofts of Asia Minor. Hence, the House of the Presbyter; and the palace on the Hooghly.

In all this there is no mention of an Italian pigeon. In all Italy where would it be most likely to be found? In some city of the Guelphs and Ghibellines; of the Montagus and Capulets. A little town; not Florence, or Venice. In fact, it is Modena, the scenes of furious fighting between Guelph and Ghibelline. It is appropriate, therefore, that the Modena pigeon should be divided between gazzi and schietti. Both kinds are birds with upturned tails, rounded in head, and with a boat or hen-shaped body. But the multiplicity of their colourings is among the miracles of nature trained by man. The gazzi, or pied, have white necks, white chest and back and thighs. Their colour is in the head and wings and tail. Schietti have no white markings, and are selfs, all one colour, or barred or laced or chequered, in tricolour: but, tricolour

¹ According to J. C. Lyell there were four great flights of a thousand pigeons each, which flew above the Hooghly, black pied, blue pied, red and yellow; many other pigeons, rare animals, and rare aquatic birds.

Gazzi or Schietti

or unicolour, the schietti are as varied as the costumes of the quattrocento. There are bronze gazzi, for the colour description depends upon the shoulder, with blue heads and tails: blue gazzi with chestnut or black bars: silver with yellowish bars tinged with black: mealy with reddish bars: blacks, reds, yellows, duns; and all the laced and chequered gazzi. Among schietti there are the unicolours, black, red, yellow, cream and white: barred schietti: blue with chestnut bars: blue with white bars: blue chequers with the chestnut bars: blacks with white or flesh tinted bars: silver with yellowish bars: and then the laced or chequered schietti. Dark blue with bronze shoulders and black lacing in different types: or the shoulders can be other colours, or, themselves, chequered. Or blue schietti with white shoulders, which in turn, are laced or chequered, red, yellow, black, or sulphur. The red-laced are upon white shoulders, but can have tails in various colours. There are, too, schietti magnani, spangled or mottled schietti, in variety beyond number. And there are the family of the argents, upon blue or red shoulders, mostly, and dark heads and necks, but with this silver finish. Many years ago, for the Modena so far as this island is concerned is a modern fancy, it was calculated that more than a hundred and fifty principal colour varieties were in existence. But this number must have been far exceeded, and is probably incalculable. It is a break, or a run of numbers, that need never end. Each group has its own subdivisions; the various laced schietti can have 'tipped' flights, for instance, while one authority suggests the possibility of gazzi magnani, a race of mottled or spangled gazzi, which, themselves, as their name denotes, are already pied. Already the Modenas wear the mediaeval particolours as worn at the festival of the Palio in Siena, or in paintings by Carpaccio or Signorelli. They are popinjays of the pigeon loft, recalling the colours of the tournament and of the courts of love. Brawling and strident

Nuns and Jacobins: Priests and Monks

in two factions, two street gangs, if this could be written of their pied bodies and laced wings.¹

A last, and numerous, family still remains. And we begin with Nuns and Jacobins: There are, as well, Priests and Monks. The Nun must be coiffed and veiled; and the Jacobin, white or shaven crowned, but with the cowl behind its head. Always white or bald pated must be the Jacobin; while the Nun can have a coloured head but must have the white coif behind it. A white coif for the Nun; and a shaved head for the Jacobin. The Nun, we omitted, has a white body always. The black Nun is black and white like a Dominican. A white coif, white body, black head, and black flights and tail. There are black, blue, red, and yellow Nuns, and duns and creams. The Jacobin, who has always a white tail and a white splash upon his feathered hood, exists in all these colours, and in kites and strawberries. Capuchins, who are shell crested and have coloured heads, belong only accidentally to this family, for they come from Asia Minor. We may think of them as missionary fathers, Latin monks of the Levant. Priests, more even than the Nuns, bring us among the German Toys. Priests are bald pated like the Capuchin, but without his hood. And they are shell crested: or have a double crest; and are tufted. A tuft of white feathers grows upon their nostrils. There are white stockinged Priests; Priests with white bars to their wings, and white tails. But the prettiest of all can be the yellow Priests.² Monks, on the other hand, are peak, but

¹ *The Modena Pigeon*, by W. F. Holmes, gives a full description of the different varieties. It is, in fact, fascinating for the information it contains. There are, even, freak Modenas, differently marked and coloured, one side from the other, corresponding exactly to the parti-coloured costumes of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, or of the festival of the Palio at Siena.

² The starling barred, white-flighted and tailed Priest, said to be the most beautiful of the Priests, was only to be met with in the districts of Hohenzollern and the Upper Neckar, and only with black plumage and unfeathered feet.

German Toys

not shell crested. And we have done with the ecclesiastics. Manes are black headed with a shaggy boa ; unkempt, black-headed Jacobins. Frillbacks, which are as Frizzles in the poultry yard, or the Sebastopol geese, have the feathers on their shoulders curled, and growing backwards. In colour, they are more often ashes, mealies, grizzles, or else strawberries.

All these, as we have said, are German Toys. They have been bred in small German towns, playthings of the tradesman and the shopkeeper, preserving even in their awkward name something of those mediaeval houses, timber-frame buildings, stepped gables, streets, it could be fancied, of Hildesheim or Dinkelsbühl. The Swallows, for instance, with their coloured caps and foot feathering of the same hue. In nine varieties, all of subtle difference. Or Spot Swallows, capless, but with a black spot above their nostrils ; sometimes with spangled wings. Tigers are striped Spot Swallows. Spots, again, are different from Spot Swallows. They are white pigeons with coloured spots and tails. And we come to Fairies, which are the shape of Swallows but with different markings and an oval coloured spot upon their foreheads ; Fire Spots, chiefly bronze in colour with a white head marking ; and Ices, the Siberian and the Ural, muffed and barred, mainly lavender in colour, with a particular sort of lacing or spangling upon their plumage, like an icy iridescence or a hoar-frost bloom. There are Victorias and Hyacinths among the larger German Toys ; Suabians in various spanglings, with lustre on their necks ; Porcelains, which are rather similar ; Starlings, of black plumage with white spotting on their breasts in form of a half-moon, like that upon the Pouter's globe ; Brunswicks, which are no more than Priests, but with all-white flights ; and Shields, white as the Starlings are black, with coloured shoulders and markings of a pair of milk white bars. The Swiss or Crescent are shaped like the

Fantasy upon the German Toys

Starling, but with other colours in their markings, and a coloured half-moon on a creamy basis. Storks are long-legged, all white, with coloured flights and a spot in colour; and there are Helmets, all white, with coloured headpieces and coloured tails. The family of the Latz, or bodice pigeon, is white bodied with coloured heads, and coloured chests and tails. Gimpels, or bullfinches, belong to this division in their clear-cut markings; actually, they are Archangels; they can be red or yellow upon white, or gold and slaty blue; while, finally, the Larks are a sept to themselves in various colours. Coburgs and Nürnbergs, and many others. The number is infinite. A lifetime would go quickly in comparing them.

Nuns and Capuchins, Priests and Spots and Swallows open in their colours one of the worlds of human artifice. They could be looked on as a folk art or a burgher art. Petunias or zinnias of the windowboxes, near to the maypole and the witch ball, under the carved and coloured eaves. The art of the seed packet. When a living thing, with wings, and more variegated than the sunflower, breaks from the blue eggshell. Its white, or coloured wings, flutter in the pigeon loft. It mates; and the mottlings or spanglings are improved. It takes the directions that are imposed upon it. There are pigeons we have not mentioned: Antwerps and Archangels: Dragoons, Magpies and Cumulets: and more besides. But the huge family of German Toys are no less than a domestic art, in variety without end. They can rank with ceramics, or with needlework and costume. Not less than that are they deliberate, and in effect intentional. If their nomenclature was better, if they had the names of flowers, the German Toys could be as famous as the porcelain of Nymphenburg or Meissen. To have Nuns, in their variety, flying in a garden; or Priests, or Capuchins, is to feed the imagination with all the orders of the Nuns and Friars. We can visit their convents, which are the pigeon lofts, and go in by the lattice into

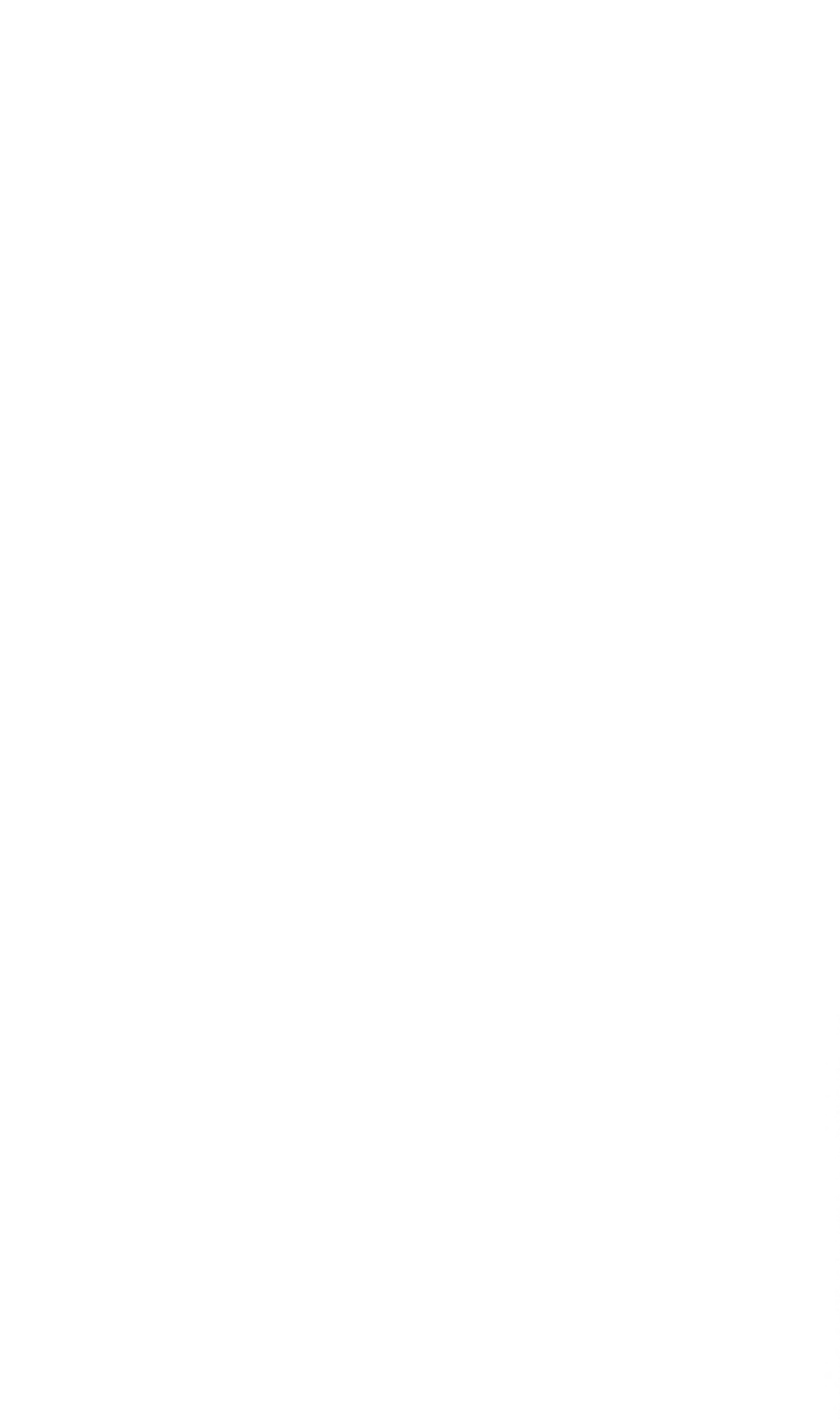
Fantasy upon the German Toys

a hundred cloisters. We hear the nuns' choir at their droning, day in, day out; and look down into a spangled architecture, as lustrous as the dove's throat, of frosts and chequers and diaperings, with every tint of gilding. That is why the two Celestial pigeons that have plumage of a golden hue are so unique and valuable. For the Capuchins there are monasteries, beyond number, in the country and the town; Priests live in painted presbyteries; for the Swallows there are nests below the eaves, and their bright colours influence the architecture of the painted wooden houses. Spots and Fairies live in their own villages; some in the goose plain, in Hanover or Pomerania; others in the frosted trees, below the Alpine mountains. There are Shields and Helmets, coming from the towns of cuckoo clocks; and Storks from near the Baltic. That droning, upon a curious note, is the Altenburg Drummer. Ices and Hyacinths are in competition of the hoar frost; and there are Larks from a hundred lofts near the musical box. This world of artifice need have no end. Until, being Teuton, it must turn to war.

But we have kept, till last, the Trumpeter. Because the Trumpeter is most solemn and formidable of all pigeons. And its note is a low drumming. It could be the Trumpeter that played in the house of Mr. Mompesson. In Germany there are many sorts of Trommeltauben, or drumming pigeons, in every colouring, and both barred and chequered; but the true Trumpeter comes from Turkestan, and was imported from Bokhara in the 'sixties. Peculiar to it are the rose and shell, and its excessive foot feathering which can be nearly equal to the wing in size, of loose feathers like the Bersagliere's bunch of plumes. The shell or crest is as in other pigeons. But the rose is entirely individual to the Trumpeter. It is a circular, close-fitting cap of feathers, like that of the crested canary. In fact, it is a feather helmet; and the feathers should radiate from the centre like the petals of a flower. The eyes are over-



TRUMPETERS
by Ludlow



Red Trumpeters and Golden Yellows

shadowed by it, so that the Trumpeter can but look down. There are mottled Trumpeters, and blacks, and whites. After more than fifty years of experiment a fancier has produced red Trumpeters and golden yellows. It is a pleasant thought to consider skill and patience so employed. And, in the result, the range of nature has been extended. To have bred two such particular and individual strains is to achieve in a lifetime what is accomplished by nature in many hundred years. Not less than a perfection of the minor arts. And, in such an instance, the fulfilment of what was destined for it. For the Trumpeter is so peculiar that its potentialities had to be exploited. It has such a solemn and deliberate walk. Its voice is strange and not a little sinister. That it comes from Bokhara, and has changed its black or white to red or golden yellow, is but the enhancement of its properties. The white, and the black Trumpeters are somewhat ghostly in effect. Ghostly, when silent; more ghostly, still, when they are drumming. Like so many birds, they are human in metempsychosis. Their silence is human; and their drumming is in travesty of human sound. Like the drummer of Tedworth in the case of Mr. Mompesson. Not a voice from the underworld: but a voice, in certainty, from very far away. From the far, deep interior. From Central Asia. The mythical Bokhara; brought away from there in the years of the stiff crinoline, and since, improved into reds and golden yellows. But, still, the Trumpeter. A note that is different in the dove house; and a pigeon more curious than any other.

Of the living world. But not of the whole past. There were the flightless pigeons. For these, we must transport ourselves into a distant island. Here are the words of a Dutch sea captain, writing of a voyage in 1602.¹ 'Another day, four sea-

¹ Our account is abridged from *The Dodo and its Kindred; or History, Affinities, and Osteology of the Dodo, Solitaire, and other extinct birds of the Islands Mauritius, Rodriguez, and Bourbon*, by H. E. Strickland and A. G. Melville, London, 1848.

Salted Dodos

men set out from the tent, provided with sticks, nets, muskets and other necessities for hunting. They climbed up mountain and hill, roamed through forest and valley, and during the three days that they were out they captured half a hundred of birds, including a matter of twenty Dodos, all of which they brought on board and salted. They have great heads, with hoods thereon. The Dodos are without wings or tail, and have only little winglets on their sides, and four or five feathers behind, more elevated than the rest. They have beaks and feet, and commonly in the stomach a stone the size of a fist. . . . Later from the abundance of turtle doves which the men procured, they became disgusted with the Dodos.' Sir Thomas Herbert, visiting Mauritius in 1627, writes of the Dodo: 'Her visage darts forth melancholy, as sensible of Nature's injurie in framing so great a body to be guided with complementall wings, so small and impotent that they serve only to prove her Bird.'

A few years later a living Dodo was in London. Sir Hamon Lestrange, in a MS. now in the British Museum, says: 'about 1638, as I walked London streets, I saw the picture of a strange fowle hung out upon a cloth [hiatus in the MS.] and myselfe with one or two more then in company went in to see it. It was kept in a chamber, and was a great fowle somewhat bigger than the largest Turkey cock, and so legged and footed, but stouter and thicker, and of a more erect shape, coloured before like the breast of a young cock fesan, and on the back of dunn or deare colour. The keeper called it a Dodo, and in the end of a chymney in the chamber there lay a heape of large pebble stones, where of he gave it many in our sight, some as bigg as nutmegs, and the keeper told us that she eats them, (conducing to digestion).' By 1693 the Dodo was extinct. At a public dinner in Mauritius in 1816, several persons from seventy to ninety years of age were present, who had no knowledge of such a bird from recollec-

The Solitaire

tion or tradition. A contemporary states that no more traces of the existence of the Dodo could then be found, than of the truth of the tale of *Paul et Virginie*.

Another of the flightless pigeons lived in Rodriguez, an island lying three hundred miles to the east of Mauritius. It was uninhabited when a colony of French Huguenots settled there in 1691, and remained for two years. Their commander, François Leguat, in his *A New Voyage to the East-Indies*, writes: 'Of all the birds in the island the most remarkable is that which goes by the name of the Solitary, because it is very seldom seen in company. . . . They have scarce any tail, but their Hind-part covered with feathers is roundish, like the crupper of a Horse; they are taller than Turkeys. They never fly, their wings are too little to support the weight of their Bodies; they serve only to beat themselves, and flutter when they call one another. They will whirl about for twenty or thirty times together on the same side, during the space of four or five minutes. The motion of their wings makes then a noise very like that of a rattle; and one may hear it two hundred Paces off. . . . The females are wonderfully beautiful; some fair, some brown; I call them fair, because they are of the colour of fair Hair. . . . As soon as they are caught, they shed Tears without crying, and refuse all manner of Sustenance till they die.' The Solitaire became extinct about the same time as the Dodo. In the Île de Réunion, or Bourbon, a bird, similar to the Solitaire, survived until about 1760; while there is some evidence of another flightless bird, the Vouron patra, in Madagascar.

Fruit pigeons, and many varieties of pink-headed doves are found upon the Pacific islands. Especially beautiful are those from the Admiralty and Solomon Islands; nearly all the species, according to one authority, have the crown of the head of a bright rose or crimson colour, and the plumage green, purple, white, orange, and yellow. The nutmeg pigeon

A Dodo in the Strand

comes from the Louisiades; while, in Papua, there is a fruit pigeon, the *Carpophaga puella*, with golden green plumage, a purple breast, grey head, and underwing and tail coverts of a deep orange yellow. The great crowned pigeon comes from Papua, too; as large as a turkey, delicious to eat, of blue colour, with an arched crown of feathers. There is, also, the nearly extinct *Didunculus strigirostris*, or tooth-billed pigeon of the Samoas. 'The nearest living ally of the now vanished Dodo.' We wonder, too, what can be the green plumaged pigeon, almost like a green parrot, that haunts, or used to haunt, the isle of Oesel in the Baltic, off Esthonia, but formerly a part of Russia.

And, thus, the world of the rock dove is inhabited and complete. For the Dodo and the Solitaire are of its family: its collaterals, not descendants. In the words of the book from which we quoted: 'These birds were of large size and grotesque proportions, the wings too short and feeble for flight, the plumage loose and decomposed, and the general aspect suggestive of gigantic immaturity. About two centuries ago' (and another century has passed by since these words were written) 'their native isles were first colonized by Man, by whom these strange creatures were speedily exterminated. So rapid and so complete was their extinction that the vague descriptions given of them by early navigators were long regarded as fabulous or exaggerated . . . and these birds became associated in the minds of many persons with the Griffin and the Phoenix of mythological antiquity.' And yet, as we have shown, there was once a living Dodo in a chamber in Cheap-side or the Strand; while some of the bones are preserved at Copenhagen, in the British Museum, and in the Ashmolean, of which relics much careful examination has been made and the Dodo established, thereby, as of the order of the Columbidae. The Solitaire, from bones found in caverns in Rodriguez and the Île de Bourbon, has been proved to be of the

Formal Birds: Florists' Pigeons

same origin. Both were pigeons. For how many thousand years can the Dodo have been developing its peculiar characteristics? The wobbling gait with which it walked, and the slow or lethargic nature, 'suggestive of gigantic immaturity'; this, and the comical contrast when it hurried, can easily be imagined of it. 'The Dodos with their round sterns (for they were well fattened), were obliged to turn tail', so runs the account of one of the early navigators who landed on Mauritius and saw this happen. There is no description of the sound the Dodo made. Beyond doubt, it will have been some utterance exceptional to itself. A note that none will ever hear again.

This description of a family of birds is intended to point the differences between the formal and the natural, and in so doing, establish that the formal or artificial laws, if they offer the opportunity, are capable of as wide a variety as the laws of nature. Certain directions are implicit, and have to be obeyed. Within their limits there is boundless infinity of detail. Such are the formal, as against the natural, laws of nature. The white or black Trumpeter is 'worked up' into reds or golden yellows. Nature sets the occasion, and it is for man to profit by them. Her own moves are less deliberate and on a bigger scale. It is only seldom, as with the Birds of Paradise, that she delays in some lonely forest glade, or upon some island, where her changes are more radical than can be made by human skill. It should always be possible to tell the human from the natural handiwork. Lacing, spangling, pencilling can be improved: the self-colours can be made purer and more lasting, till the strain is fixed and they breed true. Compare that thing of artifice, a gold or silver Sebright bantam, with a golden pheasant! We would have in mind every spangling and pencilling of the pigeon's throat while we listen to the doves of Dodona. Men have learned skill, but have forgotten prophecy. All their religions have not altered birth and

The Oracle Begins

death. The living can be made different ; but not the manner of their end, nor their beginning. All that can be assembled is the beauty of their skill. It is in vain, if more than that is wanted. And has nature, herself, more than that in view : who allows a race to perish, or will let the beautiful be weak, and make the ugly strong? Listen to the gentle doves! And consider nuns and priestesses, virgins behind the grille, the swallow-winged, the coiffed, the ruffed, the maned! Of the less admired, chequers, mealies, grizzles, strawberries! The pure white, than which no milk or snow are whiter! Pouters when they 'blow', for what their puffed out globes express of pride and contentment. In ecstasy of warmth and well-being, as the purring of a cat before the fire ; or upon the wing, with their great crops distended. Black Fantails ; pigeons that are messengers ; that play among the clouds ; or that never leave the pigeon loft. The dove in a wicker cage on the walls of a peasant's cabin ; at the windowsill of a slum ; in a ship's rigging many hundred miles from shore ; the dead dove buried in a dead child's hand ; birth from the blue eggshell ; the nests and arbours of Dodona.

Towards evening a wind comes in from the sea, and at once they make ready for the oracle. The rustic peace is unadorned with architecture. No pillars show between the tree stems. There are only the green chambers of the priestesses, torn down and set up anew in another place, and the huts of the attendants, which are like shepherds' cabins. Dodona has left no ruins and nothing but the music of its name. No more than four walls of stone protect the utensils and belongings of the temple, which, in effect is not a temple but a mere shelter for listening to the crooning of the doves and to the shaking of the leaves, fresh woven on most evenings according to the oracle of preceding days, moved, in fact, from place to place, but always in the grove. They wait, hand and foot, upon the

Hanging of the Cauldrons

winds and upon the wood pigeons. When it rains, there is no purpose in the oracle. What it demands are the gentle breezes, or a tremendous storm. You may have one, and then the other, in these mountains. At the moment it is no more than the spinning of a leaf, one leaf alone, and that one green and young, as though it had a special sensitivity and was a messenger warned long ahead, or in premonition born of its own tenderness. It spins in a little whirlwind of its own, and in the stillness, could be something moving in the branches. It is watching you; or a mortal combat, without a sound, in the nether world below the leaves. More likely still it is a signal. And it is but a leaf spinning or turning before the storm.

Immediately, they make their preparations. The heavy bronze kettles are carried out from the sacred precincts, two men to a cauldron, and are hung upon the air so that they dangle from the boughs. In this way, as if its own music was not enough, they load a tree with drums or gongs. When one moves it communicates the motion to the rest. Other wind-swayed objects, on which the wind might blow and tap against their sides, are hung up near them. And, at once, the rhythmic sway begins, in hypnotic cadence, so regular, and withal, so infinite in variation, opening every conjecture, every apprehension. It is capable of any meaning, and the interpretation alters with each breath of wind. But we shall find that a question is posed exactly, and answered on the moment. It is the rhapsodic mood: the inspired frenzy and the cold reply. But not always. There can be terror in its sound. This dressing of the branches cannot be accomplished quickly. And it must be done in silence. Some of the boughs have marks of chains upon them, as though already bound in servitude, but it is no more than a rein on Behemoth. The great monster trembles from top to foot, and dashes wildly in the storm. When it comes! At present, there is only the stir-

The Homing of the Winds

ring of a leaf. And another : and another. And, now, a young branch no bigger than a hand, that is immensely agitated as though a drama is playing that is too small to see, but contingent and ominous to ourselves. It is yet more mysterious if you are close to it. There can be no other explanation than that it is spinning on a broken stem, but this does not account for its peculiar action. Wherever you look, each oak or beech tree has this premonition. But it makes no sound so that it cannot be read in words. It is no more than the warning.

It is the homing of the wind, as it comes down dropping from the mountains. Always at the same hour, in summer, once the snows are melted. A western wind, which, leaving at midnight when the sacred fountain flows, plays all day upon the ocean, in the Ionian islands and out upon the main, in that blue infinity where the dolphins plunge, and coming back, blows upon the fruits and flowers that will ripen, next morning, with the sweetness of his breath. Young Zephyrus, in fact, a god in the form of a youth, who is winged and crowned with flowers ; and the gentle 'zeffiretto' of the poets and of song. To whom a letter was indited, to accompaniment upon the lute or harp, asking for a meeting, that night, in the garden, while as many intrigues were played as in the loves of Vertumnus and Pomona of the Latins, disguises of an officer, a gardener, and a silken skirt, all in the play, where the page Cherubino is almost the god of mischief, and yet, in his divine melodies, the god of song.

But it is not the western wind, only, that comes back to rest within the boughs. Sometimes it is Africus, the south-west wind, with black wings and a sullen countenance, from lands of slaves. He presides in the mines of porphyry, and where basalt is dug out of the hills. He curls the negro hair, and carries gold dust in sarcasm of the yellow sands. All the monsters are in his territory : deserts : great rivers : the first temples and last mysteries. Another wind, Solanus, little

Various Winds and their Attributes

known, little heard in the branches, is a young man holding fruit in his lap. He brings the crocus, and all fruits and flowers that are improbable in their beauty: peach and nectarine, white pæony and red-gold orange: the jasmine, so humble to have so sweet a breath: bluebells that paint the woods in May: strawberries of golden fleck; the gentian in her high blue meadows: and many more. Corus, the north-west wind, drives the snow before him; and Aquilo, from the north-east, has the talons of an eagle. All of these, except Zephyrus, are the lesser winds, loosed from the cave of Aeolus on uncertain days. Corus and Aquilo are but birds of prey who hover above the glaciers; for Boreas, the north wind, controls the rain and storm. He is wrapped in cloud, and is fog-king of the murky underworld and of the frozen tundra. But, as well, of the frost, his summer palaces; of architecture that, on a still day like a mirror, falls, bit by bit, and breaks like glass upon the ground. His flower gardens, beyond Borysthenes, in the unknown waste, are the frost flowers upon every window, in parterres that are geometrical according to the set rules of the crystal. His attendants shoot with arrows that are tipped with meteors. They come to him in reindeer sledges. And there are Auster and Eurus, great winds out of the south. Auster, old and bent, with dusky wings, like the figure of old Time, master of the rain and of all heavy showers, for ever wandering with no continent for home, or no land they knew of, though his territory was the Antipodes, a shore of beachcombers of the oyster midden, and an old emptiness, a dried-up core within. Eurus, the south-east wind, a youth who is the god of squalls and sudden winds, who buffets all sails that were the invention of his master, Aeolus, flying impetuously out of the islands of the Indian main, god of the typhoon. In that name we hear his wailing, and the vessel running for, and grinding on, the reef; where, next morning, it will be the Hesperides beyond the ocean, isles of

The Western Wind

coral, with golden apples—if they be apples?—hanging on the trees. Here are the dances of Bower Birds and of the Birds of Paradise, who build their dancing floors and tread before their partners, miming the rites of nest making, placing gifts and presents at the hen bird's feet, enticing her with their bright plumage into the measures of the dance. There are the play of symbols, the beginnings of aesthetic feeling, in this plumed pantomime. They, only, of the race of birds, have attained to leisure and can attempt the arts of luxury and indolence. It is their ease to paint the winds with their long tails and mantles; to descend, fluttering, with their blue streamers; to sweep the breezes with their ten-wired lyres; to raise and lower their chromatic crests; and drop gold and silver through the muted morning, while they shout their raucous cries.

Such could be the homing of the winds as they come down, dropping, to Dodona. For we return to the crooning turtle dove. All of the winds, at some time or other, have come to rest among the boughs. The ship *Argo* had a beam on her prow made of the oak trees of Dodona; and, in the gales, its creaking timber gave oracles to the Argonauts, and would warn them of impending danger. There is no space, now, to follow them to Colchis. But the winds, one and all of them, in their different persons have spoken in the oracle. Which wind is it this evening? It is a sea wind which, till noon, stayed in the high mountains and only reaches here towards sunset. The mountaineers, coming down from the pass, had stood like sea birds on the rocks, looking down into the vale below, baring their arms and breasts and stretching their necks to catch the breezes. They breathed in the balmy air, uttering their delight in short, sharp cries, and by the flutter, as it were, of their extended wings. It is the wind of the western world, for our help, in our own time of the cruel present, blowing from beyond Gades, out of the New World, where

The Western Wind

our past is their future and mankind may have a rest from wars. But, on a golden evening of the Old World, and there were many, then, and until now, it brought soft music, marble buildings, poetry, architecture, the arts of Peace. Till then! O! when will it blow again to cool the temples!

But now, this moment, the breath of it is already in the branches. It leaps, easily and quickly, into the boughs, like a youth who is an agile climber and soon reaches to where the fruit hangs down. At Dodona it is for his own pleasure that he plays among the leaves. Here are no fruit nor flowers. The grove is solemn and sacerdotal. But it is active: it is a living principle. That long waiting for the wind to come was as the expectancy for a miracle to happen. Zephyrus is in the branches: or, at present, Zephyrus, for the wind will change. They lift and sway, like boats tied up to a quay and riding on a swell. But not any vessels that mortal eyes have seen. These are swings or cradles that ride upon the air. And, after the first ecstasy, they are still again. The next time it is like the falling rain. From the highest branches downward, a shivering of the whole tree. Its shimmer is like falling water, in leaves or particles that you cannot follow with the eyes. And it trembles, in delirium, in no apparent wind. Some supple form is moving where the leaves are too thick to see, high up, where the stem diminishes and its limbs divide. The god has many disguises. Again that riding of the branches, as if upon a wake or swell, so that they would dash against the face and body, vessels tossing upon the tide and pulling at their ropes. And, in the same simile, they are the meshes of a net that is cast, and dragged in, and cast again. He is metamorphosed into a fisherman, an Epirote, a lovely youth coming in from the sea, only clothed about the waist for wading, in the knitted or stocking cap of the fisherman, and holding a live fish in his hand.

Another moment, Dodona lies still in apprehension, wait-

The Peasant Winds

ing for the trumpet. Vertumnus, these are his legends, has become a soldier, and we shall behold the glitter of the leaves. We hear him knocking, knocking; and feigning drunkenness he stumbles up the stairs into the room of boughs. We hear him serenade Pomona; or it should be Rosina. An old man, or a priest, is snoring. Or he has come in as her music master, and she sings to his accompaniment on the guitar or lute. Did I not say of the Western wind that it brought soft music and the arts of Peace! The peasant or the reaper winds come last. Bucolic, and apt for Dodona where the doves are crooning. We hear a droning bagpipe; and little winds, nothing violent, bring oaten sounds. They are cutting the corn from early morning; and one of the reapers takes his rest, hidden far within the wood. In the golden evening, when they have done, one is missing from their number. And, now, to win her, in the form of an old woman he crawls into the wood, to gather sticks. Three old women, priestesses or Parcae, come from their cobwebbed bowers. The oracle begins.

The first note of metal shudders upon the ear. With a sudden shock, dying haphazard, as if it were an accident. And then another: one more: and, now, several together. It dies down: and is taken up, again, again. In a curious sense their din, which is so arbitrary, has the effect of a strange language. Its pauses, and the way in which it is resumed, are like a foreign tongue spoken, near by, when you are ill, or half-asleep. Not in monologue: nor dialogue: it is a metal nation, as numerous as the race of pigeons, and it is a language that can be learned. If you pose a question to them it will be answered. The interrogation must be repeated many hundred times, until, in itself, it has hypnotic import. Or it can be exposed, written upon a reed, or incised into a clay tablet. The procedure can become terrible, like a protracted childbirth, or someone who will not die. Side by side sit the priestesses in

The Statue with a Whip

their long grey gowns, smoke-thin, figures of no depth, like ghosts who might have crawled from a hollow tree stem. Or they wander in the orchestra, listening, for it is music to an untrained ear. But nothing happens. The oracle has not spoken. It is a music of discords, some of the bronze bowls or cauldrons being famed for their resonance, and much feared.

As if it were an ecstasy of self-torment there is every device and implement to make them speak. Chains, or wooden clappers on a hempen rope, are dangling near them. Iron nails for spurs: sherds of pottery: leafy branches that they may rub themselves: and, now, a boy comes with a three-lashed whip. He is naked and, even in the starlight, marked with scars, himself, as though borrowed from Diana Orthia's shrine, in Sparta, where boys were whipped before the altar, in the Diamastigosis, or festival of flagellation. He lashes at the cauldrons in the severe and unfeeling manner of that ceremony. They yield, as it were, in terrible and ringing cries, not as hardy as the Spartan youths who bore their punishment without a murmur. It becomes deliberate and terrible to watch. If he believes in the oracle, the cauldrons are animate objects that can be made to suffer and yield their souls in torment. In antiquity his place had been taken by a brazen statue holding a whip in its hand. When the wind blew, this statue raised its arm and struck one of the cauldrons, which set the others in motion. But the boy with the whip is aid or accomplice of the winds, chosen from among the shrine's attendants, and the intervention of his person brings human passions into this music without form. Being, as it were, the temple's torturer or executioner, he is the poorest of their serfs, and in his ordinary work would be scavenger or scullion, of unknown origin, born among the goats and swine. He works naked, so as to resemble the bronze statue, and has to thrash the metal cauldrons with all his strength so as to

Coming of the Sacred Frenzy

draw their cries. The whole starlit grove rings and shudders with their agony. Indeed, patches of light between the trees become, in simile, the blood or tears of this intercession.

In their high branches the turtle doves are woken and begin crooning. Their note can be of nothing but love. Even a pigeon that is dying in your hand can do no more than croon. Their music in the grove, whether by night or day, is a constant affirmation, a reiteration, denying nothing. And their music is answered. They are a pair together, blending into the entire symphony or nation of the wood pigeons. And, as well, there is the shaking of the leaves and boughs. But a change is coming. The breeze no longer cools. Instead, there are little hot winds that stab, and come from nowhere, so small and personal that they can ruffle the hair, or touch the wrists or forehead, in their passage through the trees. In image, they might be no bigger than the three-winged symbols of the holy spirit, a phenomenon like St. Elmo's fire, or the marsh gases that on a summer night move in mystery across the swamps. Impossible, therefore, not to consider them as messengers, for they blow with no warning and are gone again, as though they were but signals. Nor have they any certain direction. They are sent here and there, as if at random, and like the missiles of the poltergeist, turn corners and have a curving and deliberate flight. Sparks or burning brands of a fire, thrown off by it, but under its control, going about their mission and, in the end, returning to their master. The grove of Dodona is quite traversed and penetrated by these winds before the storm. By some mystery, their effect is more psychical than physical. Its stimulus is of apprehension and foreboding. That hot breath warns of some impending force. It is sent forth as a preliminary, to prepare for what will follow, and this argues that the thunder has some pride or premonition of its strength. Such deliberate preparation is personal, and a part of its being. When it thunders without

Reign of the Halcyon

warning, this is, also, we may think, planned, and preluded by an utter silence. But now, it gets ready with every weapon in its power. It is another entity coming to take possession of the wood and sending its forerunners in advance of it.

Where it has not reached, yet, the reign of the halcyon holds still. It is where the doves are crooning. We first met with it in the form of a youth who leapt into the branches, and the homing of the wind or winds gave us their persons in the many disguises that they feigned. Their lovely cool, and the sound they made, must have legends round them. But, now, it is the halcyon, a lull which is more magical because it will not last, a dangerous or stilted calm, a golden reign that will perish, or be shattered, an epoch gone to decadence. Days and nights of singing, with no other work to do; the season of the halcyon must be unruffled as its name in the high oaks and beeches of Dodona. It is to extol the various winds and describe their homecoming, to listen to the oracle, whether in the leaves or water, that we have journeyed to this sacred grove; but, in order, above all, in the June weather of so long ago, to hear the crooning of the wood pigeons and to feel the halcyon night dying as all lovely things must end. For that reason we have met with no architecture and few persons. And it is but the disaster of a moment. To-morrow, or upon another day, the halcyon will have come back. No need to mourn for him: nor weep the folding of his wings.

And now inspiration has come down into the grove. The priestesses are seized with frenzy. Winds and times have overlapped. It is the meeting of the waters. The old crones, as though possessed, have passed from catalepsy into the most violent and distorted motions. They tremble from head to foot, in rhythm to the clashing of the cauldrons. Each note of metal is a shudder or convulsion so that they shake with the winds; but when the bronze kettles are struck with the whip they shriek and moan in an exultant agony, as though with-

Storm of Thunder

ing in a fire. The impact of each blow must be as if a white-hot bar or rod of metal was pressed upon their bodies, and stayed burning into their flesh, a fierce and terrible fire, somewhat of a caress, for it tortures so eagerly, followed by another and another, so that the torment is continual and there is no respite from it. In their frenzy it is they who suffer. They are the instruments who, soon, will be forced to speak. It is they who have been lashed into the sacred fury, writhing under the whip, and goaded by it into confession when they know not what they say. In their words there will be much mystery and a sense or threat of truth, as in a statement upon the rack when there is clear evidence amid the ravings.

Of a sudden there is deep silence. Something falls through the branches everywhere at once, and it has begun to rain. Hardly has this happened, than the thunder comes. Without lightning: or the flash was as the winking of an eye. It hits like the crack of a whip, and then booms and rattles the whole firmament, in the halls of the underworld, and from the darkening air. A leaden moment, the beginning of the reign of doom: in the black void, now starless, in the frightful caverns, and in the grove. Booming, shaking, rattling, not still, but moving as though to seek its victims and in pride of its dread dominion, out of which only evil comes. When it ends there is but a clattering and discordant din, a dying of the copper cauldrons as the echo faints from them as though in horror.

Immediately, lightning leaps into the world, in psychic shudder, or premonition, for it makes no noise. War comes by forced marches into the valley of the halcyon. The tents of prophecy are struck down. Not a living person can be seen. The cataclysm comes, again, again. It is eternal war. But, in the morning, the doves will shake their wings. The halcyon returns. It is the crooning, crooning, that never stops. *Do-dona*, once more: the turtle doves and murmur of the grove.

Book IV

*Dramas and Dance Cycles of the
Islands: The Areöi Society*



Book IV

Dramas and Dance Cycles of the Islands: The Areöi Society

We arrive in a vessel after a long voyage. Our ship is rocked by the sunset wind.

All morning we lay against the reef, grinding upon the walls of coral, casting the lead, calling out the fathoms. For the coral atoll is but just below water. Looking down, we see patches of clear white sand for floor, and fishes with spots and stripes of gold, like birds on the trees, among the branches of the corals. Of these, later. For they live and breathe in their own element. That is Poseidon's kingdom, though he is known by other names.

Over and upon this, with a long swell, the ocean lifts and hurls itself in an unbroken wave. But we are within the reef and have before us high hills and a dazzling white strand. Instantly, the canoes come out. The first is filled with gifts of fruits and flowers. In another are the high priests and their idols. The King comes last with his attendants. They are dressed in brilliant cloaks and helmets of red feathers. But the King's cloak is entirely yellow, and shines in the bright sun like gold. Climbing on board, they throw their cloaks upon our shoulders; place their feather helmets on our heads; put their fans into our hands. An hour later the hood of night comes on the land.

The Yellow War Cloak of the King

And so we have reached an island, big or small. No need to be precise. It is all Oceania ; the coral sea of many isles and archipelagos. Oceania of the light skinned races. Not the Negritos, nor the Melanesians. But the voyage was a necessity. This cannot be written of as though we were native to the islands. Nor, entirely, as if we came from their Antipodes. We are a disembodiment ; and write of what we see with the eyes of the poet or the artist, having all antiquity for our journey here, until the recent past. It is a subject for a composition, to be judged by intrinsic, not by literal truth. We will allow ourselves, after being carried here, to enjoy the recreation of this enchanted spot. For that, we will wait for the voyages of the Areöis. That is our subject.

Meantime, for accuracy, we return to the large red feather caps, for that detail may give identity to what will become general to this coral sea. Their cloaks and helms of feathers are made, more often, of the red, yellow, and green feathers of a small bird. Another bird, *Melithreptes pacifica* of the ornithologists, inhabits the mountains and has under each wing a single yellow feather only, of an inch in length. They are caught with birdlime smeared on poles, and the pair of feathers taken from them. The yellow war cloak of the King, which we saw shining on the strand, and that became more like a cloak of gold as he was rowed nearer to the vessel, is four feet long and eleven and a half feet round the hem, made entirely of these feathers. It was formed during nine successive reigns. Dating from the antiquity, therefore, of this paradisaal shore. 'For the most prominent feature in the character of the islanders appears to be their love of indolence, in which the too great bounty of nature has permitted them to indulge.' This much may we read, even of a hundred years ago : 'and that they appear hitherto to have been an exception to that common law of nature, which has seemed everywhere

The Snow White Tappa

else to have imposed toil in greater or less degree upon all men.' Shall we continue?

But these shores of fragrance must display their population. The women dress in long, loose calico gowns of gaudy colours, preferring red or yellow; some of them wearing a small girdle or gay handkerchief tied round their waists. Over their calico gowns they wear silken shawls; with a wreath of red or yellow flowers, or an ornament of red or yellow wool upon their heads. They walk barefoot. The girls in their dances form headdresses of living fireflies, which they impale upon slips of bamboo, and fix in such a manner that for hours they wear the glittering diadems in their hair. Their chiefs are clothed in pieces of snow white tappa, made from the paper mulberry, and allow the trains to drag after them along the ground.

Husbandmen have aprons of red dracæna leaves, ornaments made from the pearly nautilus, and chaplets of flowers of the scarlet hibiscus. Their tattooing is plainly visible. One pattern, varying in its details, is like the crown of a palm tree. It springs from the central line of the back, and gracefully curls round both sides of the body. They, also, wear a picturesque kind of hat made of palm leaves, which, in the words of an eye witness, gives an interesting finish to their manly figures. And the fishermen, in their canoes, use long bamboo rods and lines, from which a pearl imitation of a flying fish is attached, for the capture of the bonito, dolphin, or albicore; or plunge into the water with a hand net, when they come in danger from the sharks; or their long black hair may get entangled and held fast in the branches of the corals.

That is Oceania, from end to end. Not a particular island, but the consensus of its Pacific sands. Paler than our shores, as though there were more pearl shell here. For the waves roll from half across the world, and in a million years have

The Areöi Society, or The Strolling Players

ground the shells into a fine white dust. They are shores of coral, too. It is, in fact, the coral sea.

And among one group of islands we find the Areöis. The Jesuit fathers describe something similar in the Caroline and Ladrone Islands. The Areöis, for we must quote again: 'were a sort of privileged libertines, or strolling players, who formed themselves into a society for the worship of the god Oro, and the practice of immoral dances and pantomimes. They spent their time in travelling from island to island, and from one district to another, exhibiting their performances, and spreading a moral contagion throughout society. The numbers connected with this fraternity, and the magnitude of their expeditions, will appear from the fact of Captain Cook witnessing, on one occasion, in Huahine, the departure of seventy canoes filled with Areöis. On board the canoes in which they travelled they erected temporary altars, for the worship of the tutelary deities of their society. On public occasions they painted their bodies with charcoal, and stained their faces with a scarlet dye. At times they wore a girdle of ripe plantain leaves, and ornamented their heads with the bright yellow and scarlet leaves of the barringtonia. Their entertainments consisted in delivering speeches ludicrously referring to public events, in pantomime exhibitions, in wrestling, and in dancing during the night to the music of the flute and drum. In the constant display of these often obscene exhibitions, they passed their lives, strolling from one place or island to another.'

In our eyes they are South Sea Islanders. To themselves, they are inhabitants of the living world. But, for our purposes, they are neither the one, nor the other. Not more than the personalities of universal legend. Their fruits and flowers, as much as the fragrant winds and coral shore, are the classic architecture of this myth. If we impute to them more of beauty and intelligence than they possessed, it is in the in-

Wheezing Harmonium

terest of the ideal, and no more, it may be, than to the eyes of their beholders.

This may be the moment, too, in which to discredit the stories of the Protestant missionaries. It was not long before, under their influence, the women and girls at Sunday service wore hideous bonnets, like huge coal scuttles, based upon the middle class fashion of the 'forties, when the missionaries first arrived. The islanders fell out of an earthly paradise into a Sunday slum. The conch shell was made silent by the harmonium. We attach little more importance to their stories than to their promises of heaven. The one, indeed, contradicts the beauty of the other. That the Areöis were immoral is not to be denied. And it may be enquired what is meant by morals, where are neither palaces nor slums: nor sound of marriage, nor funeral bell? But the wheezing harmonium must be for ever banished. It has come and gone. It came with measles, whooping cough, and colds: and other and more wasting ills. So the tin chapel is not yet put up. We could have wished it was but an interlude, a day and night in prison; but what it touched has been destroyed for ever. It has been the hand of death: and, in life, it is better not to think of that.

In effect, we land upon this shore with all the technique learned of other lotos-eating lands. It is a food that, like fancy, has no substance. True lotos eaters are, generally, more famished than well fed. But the Lotophagi are no parallel: for the Areöis led active, and not passive, lives of pleasure. In virtue of this they become a concept that we clothe, or unclothe, with our prejudices. They are the instruments of pleasure, not the audience. Here, the Areöis spread a moral contagion throughout society, journeying from isle to isle. In a paradise where there is no poverty, nor cold. Nor excessive heat: but the seasons are tempered, day by day, instead of month by month: a little rain in the early morning so that

Poseidon's Kingdom.

earth wakes freshened. No floods, nor gales. But, for excitement, the lightning and the thunder.

We will take the climate and the scene in order to have those skies and that brilliant light for background. For it is, precisely, 'that indolence in which the too great bounty of nature has permitted them to indulge', together with the information that the Areöis 'were a sort of privileged libertines, or strolling players, who passed their lives in travelling from island to island'—it is these statements that intoxicate the imagination and make the Areöis, to our eyes, brothers and sisters to the comedians in Watteau's paintings. 'Their magnificent valleys abound not alone in luxuriant forests that attract and charm the eye, but also in trees bearing sufficient fruit to supply all their proper wants. The trees which produce the bread fruit, the banana, orange, coconut, and the chere-moya, seem to contend with one another for the palm of superior strength and beauty, and for the quantity of their spontaneous abundance. Their hogs require no care, and feed upon fruits which would otherwise rot and waste upon the ground; and their coasts abound in fish of every kind, which can be obtained at the price of no more labour than such as might be termed an agreeable pastime.' It reads like an account of paradise.

But where to begin? Along the white strand; upon the scented hills; or in Poseidon's kingdom? So many thousands of leagues of blue weather, in every direction, into the four winds, have given to these islands a character of light that is their own. As much as to oases among the yellow sands; but Oceania is a continent of islands. A coral sea of many isles and archipelagos, with an entity as of Asia or Africa, and attributes that could be personified into a statue or a painting. Unsullied of history. So that its physiognomy has no likeness to another. A continent of islands, inasmuch as Africa is black man's land. That is its meaning, that it is isle upon

Amphibian Moon

isle. That it has been built up in a million years out of the blue main. The marine Indies; for where the past of poetry or painting are concerned, the Oceanians are Indian, to be known by what ocean has yielded to them, the pearl, the sceptre of narwhal ivory. There are a million wonders in half the world of ocean; and those living in their midst could rightly be called the Poseidonians.

But, here, it is not Neptune, but another god, who has given colours, also, to the trees and flowers. Not a snowy landscape lit by the prisms in the crystal; nor that which lies yellow in a grain of sand; the chalk hills; the plain of sherds and broken marble under the acanthus and the asphodel; where the blue campanula grows from cracks in the granite; the blue delphinium from the moraine; where the oleanders in the dry riverbed compose into a myth; or an almond in blossom is the antique world upon a youthful morning; where the hills and high places are trodden by the Muses; here is nothing familiar, or that has a token meaning. All things are soft and clear as in a drop of water, but of blue water, as it might be a drop of water upon the back or shoulders of the god, himself, youth or maiden, as he climbs out of the sea.

Day and night, here, are spent, half-in, half-out of water. Amphibian noons, cooled by the surf for snow. The kingdom of the trident. Their legends are of the vast spaces of the ocean. How they beached their canoes after many days at sea, and were the first to set foot upon this isle of flowers. How they plucked, at once, the jasmine for their hair. Not a bird flew away. All stayed; or came up near, as though their bidding was to wait for man. During the first years they could be struck down like flowers. Their wings were but to float them in the pleasant winds. Flight has but one meaning. It is pure pleasure. Far away, where the sun sank, there were other isles where no one died. In other ways it was the same there. They had night and day, for none feared the dark. The

Out upon the Coral Reefs

nights were too beautiful to lose, crowned with nocturnal blossoms that lived for this hour and only opened now. The winds, too, breathed differently, and you felt the sea plumes waving in them. The clang, even, of their feathers, now and then, and the breaking of a gigantic wave. Their paradise, in fact, was but another island, for the imagination could conceive of no more fruits or flowers.

Listen! It is a huge roller breaking. And we hear laughing and singing. The fishermen are far out upon the reefs, crossing what has been uncovered by the tide; and women and girls go with them, lit torches in their hands. They will come back with pearls. The ocean gleams and drips with phosphorus. It is easy to be a maiden and return a woman in the morning. The rosy shell of Venus is in sign of that, held in the hand, for the rosy awakening of day. All will carry back shells for ornament. Their pleasure gardens are out upon the coral, which we will see, later, pool by pool, in all their wonder. What we would have, for the moment, is laughter and singing upon the coral reef. For, near at hand, the blue moonlight shows us chieftains in togas made of snow white tappa; tattooed like the drawing of the body upon the human body, only it is an abstraction, a mere pattern of dots and lines, or an arabesque of leaves and shells, but it moves with the body, it lies upon the body, it is a sculpture to be felt by the fingers upon the living flesh, it is the lunar outline upon the solar body, a form seen in double silhouette, a flickering and pursuing shadow, a shade upon a shade. These are moonlight warriors in white cloaks, beaten out of the tree bark, and all day you would hear the hammer, hammer, of the wooden mallets. Such is the loom or distaff of the islands, for it is common to them all. There are the different qualities but this is the snowy white, without pattern. The textile of the Polynesians has another sound and one to which our ears must get accustomed for we will never hear it but upon the

Trees and Flowers of the Islands

coral islands and it is much different from that of silks or cottons, to the point that it is the Oceanian fabric. Their ghosts would walk in snow white tappa, the cloth of blue ocean. It is grown in the sea gardens, so near to the marine that at the sound of a bare foot the tree crabs will drop like apples from the boughs and scuttle into the sands. Here, in the moonlight, we are under other branches—flowering branches—the tamanu,¹ with white flowers and a perfumed bark, held sacred, so that it is death to break a bough—or the coral tree, itself, with scarlet blossoms that cannot be described in moonlight, for they are blind or muted, yet burning like flames of coral in a moonlit water, until torchlight falls upon the gleaming trident, and laughing and singing, some with pearls, or some with cockle shells, the young men and maidens come in, wandering, from the reef. Then, the clusters keep their scarlet colour. It is retained, or muted, in them until the torches light the lower air.

What other flowers are there? A hundred that we could not name. But the white clematis has a sugary or spiced starlight of its own, as it trails upon the darker trees. A starlight of a few inches in density, blowing sweeter up to its petals; while the fragrance of hyacinth and jessamine mingled comes from a low shrub, the horopito, with bright green leaves as of a nutmeg tree, and waxen bells or trumpets that hang in clusters, of white, and pink, and crimson, and all shades of red. Come down to the shore, where the red fuchsia creeps out of the sands! Or but a few steps into the forest! That is another, or an underworld. Huge fungi, sprouting from the tree foot, are so broad and strong that you may sit upon them; while, upon the ground, luminous toadstools of enormous size gleam with phosphorus and shine like evil stars or constellations out of the damp.

¹ Tamanu: *Calophyllum inophyllum*. Coral tree: *Erythrina corallo-dendron*.

The Narwhal

But we seek, once more, the moonlight and the cloaks of snow white tappa. Near to them sits a queen or a princess, sceptre in hand, of sea ivory, made of the tusk of a narwhal or sea unicorn, one of the wonders of the southern seas. This monster, could we but see it, is as white as snow, marked with a few dark spots or blemishes; its belly, white and glistening, and as soft as velvet to the touch. With their tusks they break the thin ice, to breathe, down in the dreadful South where the Pacific becomes Antarctic. The explorer Scoresby remarks of the narwhal: 'a great many were often sporting about us, sometimes in bands of fifteen or twenty together . . . they were extremely playful, frequently elevating their horns out of the water, and crossing them with each other as in fencing'. That was in the old days of the sailing ships. In our time such a sight could not be seen. The herds of narwhals are all slaughtered. This twisted sceptre came from one that drove in to shore, after a storm; or, more probably, pursued a shoal of fishes and was stranded in the shallows. Its horn was bartered from isle to isle along the coral reefs, passing from queen to queen out of their dusky hands: carried in canoes close to the triton shell, which is their war horn or trumpet blown out on the deep. You would hear, for it is still night, the voice of the triton and the splash of many oars. And the canoe comes past, at high speed, navigated by the Southern stars which lie in countless archipelagos into infinity, until the eyes can stare no longer, and a meteor glides out of the zenith, without a sound, like some portent, but dies above the sea. Another, and another, fall. They shoot, like golden bolts, out of the firmament, living only for that moment, to portend a mystery. Such was the coming of the narwhal sceptre. Listen! listen! It is the sweeping of a snow white toga. That is the noise they make. We see a shell bracelet and a dusky hand.

How wonderful are the clear colours of the morning, in Oceania, upon the Southern Seas. The pandanus trees droop

The Dryad at the Tree Foot

their fronds almost into the waves. Here is shade, instantly, of a fern-like kind. The coconut palm is in ecstasy, dancing in every wind; while the substance of shade is as much from blossoming branches as from green leaf or hoary stem. There could be, here, such an experience as to lie down to sleep in the shadow of the orange, or the shaddock, not of their leaves, but of the fruit itself, red globe on globe, or of the swollen and distended yellow moons. At foot, the pine pricks almost out of the sand. The sunlight comes down, with no dilution, for the hills are not high enough for clouds to gather. No more than terraces, or pleasant eminences from which to take the cool. And covered, from head to foot, with trees in flower. Here, by falling waters, grows the South Sea chestnut, *Inocarpus edulis*, with dark green leaves, white flowers in season, and aerial roots, like buttresses, that join the branches to the chequered earth; a bower wherein the shepherd, but there are no flocks to watch, could look, instead, down to the coral reef.

The morning and the evening breezes, playing from the shore, waft these many scents upon their wings, so that, at dawn and sunset, and long after, while our ship is rocked by the sunset wind, every breath is perfumed. Shrill voices from the town cleave the air like darts. Far into the night. Thus, the evening and the early morning. Noon is the hour of distillation, when they wax and strengthen in the stillness, in the shade of their own leaves; a spiced breath, but it hangs upon them and is not blown away. Scent of the flower mouth is part or parcel of the noonday heat. Look how it lies blue upon the dryad body! For a maiden, naked to the waist, lies in the shade. We will have music. The earth is all dappled with its cloaks of shadow and the open sunlight. Call it golden! But it is the golden yellow of a dancer's body that is painted with turmeric and coconut oil. Not yet. We are to embark, later, with the Areöis.

Music of the Islands

And crossing from shade to shade, a girl passes in a snow white shaggy dress. Of cotton tree fibre, loosely woven, and on purpose for coolness much too big in size, hiding all her body. Like a pearl in the oyster shell; or the chrysalis in the cocoon. Within that white shagginess, her nude figure is to be guessed, or dreamed of. That is the purpose in her loose white dress. For it hides her from neck to foot.

We called for music. A dryad sings from under every tree, hidden in the bracts or flowering boughs. You have but to look between, or lift them aside, and she will be lying with her companion at the tree foot, one with an empty turtle shell strung for a harp, or the sea conch to his lips blowing a mournful and a shaggy music. Always a vibrant or a wavering music, such being the nature of their South Sea throats, or in order to be heard above the sound of sea, which is never still for long upon the islands, but like the voice within the sea-shell is ever hidden there. A voice, and a sea harp or sea trumpet, that is all. It is more in the melody than in the instrument. And more in the singer than in the song.

But of an isle in utter ocean, until the dancers come in pearly coronets and necklaces of flowers. Not yet. This is the long and lazy noon. There is music, and a pause of heat. For the leaves are as hot as flames; and in those colours, burning in a steady fire. The flower bracts burn like candles. There are feathery fires upon the hills, where the tufted palms grow; and a shrill fire in the groves of bamboos, given from the green rods. That, and the deep heat of the timber trees; the teak with scarlet fruit or scarlet flowers; trees which are poisonous, the itchwood, or the leper tree; trees which give a black dye; the pine tree; or, for the haunt of music, the glorious barringtonia with red flowers; the banian with its flying buttresses; or the sandalwood tree, smelling warm and fragrant, which, when the traders come, will bring death and destruction to the island.

Landscape in its Colours

It is a scented indolence. Not the siesta of green shutters, nor of the fountain. Here, you cannot lie upon cool marble in a pillared shade. Walls that sport the snapdragon do not throw down their shadow. The hours do not chime with bells; nor does a voice call from the minaret to where merchant and beggar lie sleeping. To the court of waters, and the trellised alleys. To the mules tied up in the shade. To the honeycomb vault, and arch of stalactite opening to the orange grove. Here are no colonnades, nor dancing waters.

But it is an isle of indolence. The lustral shadows reach between the trees; flower shadows, not the shade of leaves; the form of the scarlet cone, or fiery cluster. There can be lawns of white or red sloping to the waters; or fields, more cerulean than ocean, breaking on the scarlet bough, or at the hanging fruit. A rosy soil, on which you tread the blossoms, but only in token, as though it were moonlight, for the colour comes from the loaded branch. A near shadow can be as blue as the lotus pool, and as translucent, with that same lightness as of the lotus cells, glistening in texture, as of a blue light upon the petal, blind, or matt, because there is no white on it, and it is blue through and through in all its particles, an interior blueness as though you lay within the lotus. And, near by, a tree of white flowers, smelling like hyacinth and jasmine mingled, until its difference is recognized and it becomes a person, a hand that sheds incense, a guttering candle, for it is weighed down with flowers. Here are flowers, there is no word for it, that are muted and have no smell, by that much more creamy or more velvety, as blind persons who love music or who live by touch. Each of the shades has its philosophy; those that lull; or are intoxicant; that bring discontents; or sensual longings; that are sufficient in themselves so that the imagination calls for no more than that; or by something missing are more lovely in their imperfection; that remind one of a forgotten name; or, in extension

Cannibal Feasts

of that, are as though one is so much in love that the eyes, from too much looking, have forgotten what is out of sight; others to inspire music; or build a policy or a culture that is peculiar to themselves, as it could be, cities of the gondola; melon domes; or palaces of coral, all rustication, rising from the shadowed waters. All day you could lie in a tree shade and be no further in your thoughts. It is in the Southern Seas. Here are, in fact, no more than flowers or persons. There are no great causes.

No horror but the feasts of human flesh. We may find a victim trussed and bound, sitting ready, his feet drawn up below his thighs, and his arms folded, tied tight so that he cannot move, then lifted on to the hot stones of the oven with leaves and earth thrown upon him, or put to the huge cauldron. When cooked, his face is painted black; and the flesh is eaten with great forks of many prongs, made of the hard wood of the casuarina, a drooping tree which grows about the burial places. Such are the cannibal hearths. You could see joints of human flesh hanging on the trees.

This is the landscape in islands that have hills, that are not the simple atoll. In New Caledonia, Tahiti, or the Marquesas; mainlands where you could make a journey of a hundred miles, or be lost three days' march into the interior. In Fiji, Samoa, or Hawaii, in New Britain; or New Ireland, off the coast of New Guinea, where the stone men were undisturbed until a year or two ago, and tilled their terraces and stuck their wigs of hair with flowers, living in plenty, having heard no rumour of the turning world. But, in order to comprehend the immense Pacific and its archipelagos, its lonely islands that may be destined to a bloody fame, and the reefs of coral, that ocean must be seen in entirety from the Arctic Aleutians down to the roaring South. Then we can return and set forth with the Areöis on a voyage of pleasure.

A map of the Pacific Ocean gives the following as the most

Conspectus of the Coral Islands

curious in shape of the coral atolls. Aitutaki and the Hervey Islands, among the archipelago of the Cook Islands, midway, it could be said, between Tahiti and Fiji. Niafuoō, between Samoa and Fiji, is almost a complete coral circle with a round lagoon three miles across in its middle. And three islands are more curious still; Tongareva, Rakahanga, Manihiki, isles of euphony, lying north-west of Samoa. The first is nearly a hexagon of coral, in no place wider than a hundred yards or so, with a lagoon twenty miles long and ten miles across inside it. Rakahanga is a distorted square of the same pattern; and Manihiki a square with bending sides, so that it is broken nearly into a pentagon of coral. The other is Wake Island, half-way between American Hawaii and the Philippines, an isle like a coral arrowhead, with a safe lagoon within, and lying open for the seaplanes. Guam, not less notorious for its potential future, lies much nearer to Manila, an ordinary isle of hills and valleys. These islands are important enough to be inset upon the map; how many more must lie all but virgin! There are still the islands, Los Jardines, marked 'existence doubtful', five hundred miles, or more, west from Wake Island towards the concealed mysteries of the Japanese Mandate. A seaplane from Wake Island, maybe, could solve this problem. There is no other quite like it in the world today. The Japanese Mandate extends over the Bonin Islands, the Mariana or Ladrones, and the Caroline Islands, coral atolls about which it is next to impossible to discover anything in the present for it is the policy of the Japanese to keep them, on purpose, in obscurity. Of old they were Spanish settlements and the resort of South Sea whalers. Guam is an American outpost in midst of these. Tinian, in the Marianas, has the remains of old buildings, left by an unknown race; and when Admiral Lord Anson called there, in 1742, the isle was deserted but it was remarked of the wild cattle that: 'it is not uncommon to see herds of some thousands feeding to-

Conspectus of the Coral Islands

gether in a meadow. They are all of them milk white, except their ears, which are generally black.' The Carolines lie South of these, towards New Guinea, including Yap, which is the Japanese answer to Wake Island and to Guam. These islands, too, have ruins; while, of the inhabitants, we are assured that: 'their dances are by no means indecorous, and are performed by the unmarried men and girls, who stand in a row on a plank, and with graceful movements of the arms and body keep time with their feet to the song. . . . They bathe three times a day, and anoint their bodies with scented coconut oil and turmeric.'

Other wonders of the Pacific are Easter Island, Christmas Island, and the now notorious Pitcairn. The Solomon Islands are, probably, the only cannibal islands of the modern world. Their population must be related to the stone men of New Guinea, but they are thieves and prodigals, the degenerates of that antique world. Their patriarchs are different in expression from the elders of that lost nation. Where shall we sail next? To the frightful landscape of the Galapagos, four thousand miles away, and half of that across an open ocean? A scene like Pluto's underworld; isles of the damned, for their arid hopelessness breeds suicide; igneous rocks whereon the maned lizard creeps; where the droppings of the sea-birds make a nightsoil many fathoms deep. Or south, a thousand miles, to Easter Island, where the giant images stand upon the coast in mystery. No living person knows the whole Pacific. Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, could be called three continents of islands. In respect of arts and customs New Ireland may be the most interesting of the whole Pacific Islands. Its natives were masters of what could be termed outrigger sculptures, wood carvings into which the image or fantasy of the war canoe had passed, so that they are made for speed and lightness, encased, often, in an open framework which suggests the bounding of a craft upon the pat-

Outrigger Sculptures of New Ireland

terned waters ; some great amphibian gliding in the reef pool ; or even, in extension of imagery, a bird flying, or static, but in the symbol of its powers of flight. New Ireland carvings are to be known at once. They are not dramatic and obscure, like negro sculptures, suddenly sensual, and exquisite by moments and by feeling, but always of the animal in man. Negro carvings can be nearly great art, through intensity and meaning. But New Ireland carvings have, as it were, the flying fish for canon. It is an imagery of much fin and wing, with scale and ridgeback, and the dolphin tail, which delights in springing over the billows and enjoys the resistance of the waves. All this, in terms of the tutelary deities. So that they are more excitant and poetical than wrought in terror. What must have inspired them are the forms and colours of the coral reef.

It is among the Melanesians and Papuans, and principally in New Britain, New Ireland, the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides and New Caledonia, that the dance and the savage arts have come to their fullest development. These groups of islands follow in a curve the Western coast of Australia and are, as it were, in parallel to the tribal ritual of the aborigines in Queensland, or throughout that continent, dances and initiations, arts of the masquer and of metamorphosis pursued with the intensity of total war, all else subordinated so that the drama or dance cycle can play through the seasons. The shadow life of these savages is more complex than slum life, or life in a council house in any modern town. Nearer, too, to the realities than in a city of wet pavements and back windows. In comparison, Hawaiians, Tahitians, who are Polynesian, and live in an earthly paradise, have the languor of the South and are less serious in their pleasures. They are Sicilians of the Southern Seas. And, in fact, of another race. Down South, where it is colder, there were the Maori warriors ; while Hawaii, Tahiti, the Marquesas, are the tem-

Shores of Papua

perate isles, far removed from steaming Papua and equatorial heats of the Melanesian or Negrito. But, in those tropics, the primitive savage still flowers in his prime.

It is here that an anthropologist can spend a lifetime in an island ; where a river pours the rains of Papua into the coral sea ; or in an unknown archipelago, moving from isle to isle, watching the kitchen middens rise, as it might be a hundred thousand years ago. Not in a whole lifetime could be exhausted the treasures of the land or sea ; for a language must be learned, and another tongue is spoken but a few miles away ; the shadowy taboo must be explored, which is the subconscious given phantom form ; and their involved imagery of belief and superstition be co-related and its shadow illusions understood and explained. Works, such as *Drama of Orokolo* or *Stone Men of Malekula*, are in evidence of this.¹ The time traveller could have no experience to compare with these. They are the complete antithesis ; while an aeroplane passes over the coral reef and is gone before the next wave breaks.

Concerning life in the coral pool it would be impossible to be both sober and exact. For the fishes surpass in colour all that the imagination could conceive of. Blue and silver, ultramarine, or scarlet, striped, pheasant marked, or golden spotted with drops that are of liquid gold and fade while the eye looks at them as the fish is caught ; fishes that are the macaws of the coral grove, but in greater variety ; that bask or glide, or flaunt their parrot skins ; or are singular in shape as well as colour ; monstrous and creeping, or shooting like Xiphias through the olivine, for the waters are of every colour beside the blue of Amphitrite. Their form is of a million experiments to devise beauty and swiftness ; but, as well, for

¹ *Drama of Orokolo*, by F. E. Williams, and *Stone Men of Malekula*, vol. i, *The Coral Islet of Vao* (4 vols. in all), by J. Layard ; two of the most interesting anthropological works published in our time.

Fishes of the Coral Pools

pure ornament, for there could be no other purpose than their mutual pleasure. The entire conspectus of these South Sea fishes must be impossible of attainment, for many species are in variety beyond number; nor, in a thousand years, could it be feasible to search all the coral reefs and be certain which are peculiar to what set of islands, for they may be as restricted in their habitat as the Birds of Paradise. Some may haunt one reef only; or be found in their millions all through the coral seas. Their colour mutation is no mere development of new shades and markings. But it is as though from the full palette the most opposite colours had been chosen, and growth, from the beginning, had been for clash and contrast, a sort of shadow scheme, if the light and luminous took the place of shade. Not in dun colours, but in blues and scarlets for the *poissons-perroquets*, cockatoos of the coral reef; so individual it could be a suit of colours dyed for one fish alone, until another gleams above the floor of snow white sand. Others have their fins prolonged into a pair of scaly wings; into fringed oars or rudders, according to their motion; they sail, or fly, or float, or skim upon the waters. The commonplace, the vernacular of fishes is, here, all gold or silver. They are netted, splashed, or striped with it; or, like the macolor, one of the kakatoes, are all black and grey and white, but so disposed that is in the colours of the whale or dolphin, but as pretty as a golden carp. A hundred painters, content with these wonders, could not portray them in a thousand years; and, as well, there are the different sorts of shells from the Red Sea, across the Indian Ocean, from Amboyna in the Moluccas to the Galapagos.

The true and veritable Poseidonia, the kingdom of the islands lying half across the world from Africa to the Americas. Seas of the pearl sceptre, the chambered or pearly nautilus; the latirus, which, when dry, is dull and colourless, but, upon being wetted, as though in its own element, gleams

Seas of the Pearl Sceptre

like a rainbow ; terrestrial molluscs which, like little painted shells, climb into the trees ; two hundred species of *achatinella* in the Sandwich Islands, which are their habitat ; the spotted or banded land shells of Papua and the Solomon Islands, belonging, in the language of science, to the trochiform group of helices, known as *geotrochus*, their lips brilliantly tinted with scarlet, rose, or yellow ; the *bulimi* of the forests, one of which, from the isle of Guadalcanal only, is of a delicate greenish straw colour, with the edge of the lip bright vermillion ; glittering fish hooks made from the pearl shell of the *haliotis* iris ; the shells of New Caledonia, which are more wonderful than any ; canoes that are patterned or inlaid with shells ; the clam shells that are big enough to use for fonts in churches ; and the *Triton variegatus*, war horn or trumpet of the islands. They are found on the beaches and in the pools, and, as a rule, their beauty lasts. This is not so with the fishes. They lose their colour when they are lifted from the waters. They are as far from their own element as meteors that fall upon the earth. In a moment they have lost their fire, and die dully, as the light dies.

There is the truism, also, that shells do not journey for long distances, unlike the migrant shoals. They may have their summer or their winter pastures, and change a tropic for a temperate isle. Their lanes are by instinct along and under the blue main. It is impossible, in fact, to know them all or to calculate their numbers. On a day, at any coral shore, they may appear in their nations. How, therefore, to make them tally with another shoal a thousand miles away ! A race of fish may be so rare as to appear extinct ; and then be found, in multitude, where they have wandered in the waters. The hidden droves of the deep seas must be included, which are unknown save for what the net brings up. This is of no more moment than the arrow that falls upon the plain. The huge depths are untroubled and hold to their secrets. It will be

The Coral Bastions

impossible ever to explore them thoroughly. They are dark pits or caverns illumined by strange gleams. But what necessity is there to look down into those valleys! The coral ramparts come up from the bed of ocean. Not exactly. It would be more true to say they are forts or breakwaters built by the madrepores upon the summits of marine mountains. Bastions of coral a hundred or two hundred feet in height. Not more than that. Coral-capped mountains, for the sheer cliff or precipice may fall for a thousand fathoms, and near the shore be as deep as the Himalayas. It is upon this outer rampart that the ocean lifts and hurls itself in an unbroken wave. It is deep blue, and curling over, breaks into a roar of foam, white as foam, or as the blue hair of the sea god. Thousands of rainbows shine along the spray, as though ten thousand fountains were splashing. Within the atoll the coral artisans are found, for the outer fortifications are formed by their slaves or peons. Here, in the lagoon, are brain coral (for it has the shape of that) or *moeandrina*; *astroea*; and the branching madrepores and *explanaria*; corals that are all shades of colours, not alone the red and white, but browns and yellows, pink and vermillion and deep blue. Bright red, yellow, or peach coloured *nulliporae*; the pearl-shell *eschara* and *retipora*. Such are the coral groves and coral branches.

Where to choose to study this! The first coral reefs are in the Red Sea; and from the East coast of Africa to the West coast of America there are coral isles. The Cocos or Keeling Islands in the Indian Ocean, eight hundred miles to the South of Java, are as typical of any; or Christmas, halfway from there to Java, where Captain Cook lay to, in 1777, for turtles, 'perhaps as good as any in the world'. Near by, the Indian Ocean is six miles deep. There are the Maldive atolls, below Ceylon; the Nicobars which were famed for shells; Celebes; Amboyna; and so into the Pacific. The Great Barrier Reef, a thousand miles long, runs parallel to the coast of Queensland

The Barrier Reef

and nearly touches on New Guinea. Sometimes, but ten miles from the shore; or, in places, a hundred miles or more. It is here that the waves break upon the longest terraces of coral. But the madrepores never build out of the water. Their labours are done when the reef, at low tide, is an inch or two below the surface. So that you can climb out from a boat and walk along it. And, in places, the broken pieces detached by the waves have been piled up, like blocks of cement where a pier or breakwater is unfinished; while, upon these, the softer corals have been powdered into sands, and the seaweed and the guano form a soil, until it is a little coral island. Months, or years, could be lived upon the Barrier Reef. Or but a few moments, in imagination. There is no time for more. It is the primitive world, not in its scenes and festivals, but in the untainted mornings. We are far enough from the savage men to keep them, in contemplation, across the Coral Sea. Opposite are the Louisiades, where the communal houses are built down to the shore, and the men are all fishermen.

The catamaran is poled along the shallows. A raft, made of planks lashed together; or they push it in front of them, wading upon the reef. They are savages of bestial feature, with frizzed-out mops of hair, their ears and noses slit for ornament and pierced by a piece of shell. A man of thirty is like an old man; black as a negro, but of the Papuan race, which means more hirsute, and with a sloping or receding head that expresses cruelty or cunning, filed and blackened teeth and the mouth of a carnivore, or cannibal. All his ancestors have fed on human flesh. He is an eater of raw fish; an ichthyophagite; the man of the kitchen midden, collateral of the beachcomber along every shore, groping for shellfish with his hands, but, the next moment, throwing a line which is baited with the pearly nautilus. A primitive of the coral seas, where the green iceberg never comes. An amphibian, for half of his days and nights are spent in the shoal

The Catamaran

water. His catamaran could be lying off Golconda's coasts, it is so heaped with shells. Many of those, in the antique world, would be bargained for by Kings. One of their number, *Cypraea aurantia*, 'the morning dawn' or orange cowry, when found upon the reefs is so rare that its wearer is given the dignity of a chief. The philosopher may wonder why the most beautiful is the rarest. But the savage is old enough in wisdom not to be astonished. He finds other shells, little less wonderful, which are so common they are no concern of his. They are thrown, one by one, where the waves wet them, or they even crawl along the boards. In the meantime, we will have it night. He baits his hook again with a bit of pearl shell. It is low water and he wades upon the rocks. A meteor falls across the sky. There are a myriad lights burning and no heat from them. It is the Southern starlight. This warmth of the waters is no part of that. But the planets throw down their fires which lift into long lines upon the swell. And so it is for long hours in the catamaran until the morning.

The thought of those curious nights and days takes us to one more locality before we set out with the Areöis. It is to the Sulu Islands in the Philippines, between their Southern mainland, or Mindanao, and North Borneo. In the Celebes Sea. And the sound of that gives us the high eaves of the houses, built side by side, their huge gables hanging above them like tents or crooked steeples, like the poop of a junk or the fo'c'sle of a galleon. Not all shaped alike, except in principle, so that they could be as many boats drawn up on a beach, out of the monsoon wind. These houses of Celebes or of the Sulus are a fantasy of shipbuilders, and the ribs of their eaves are carried through. They are boats, keel upwards, and the ribs have sprouted into horns or antlers. It is a wooden architecture influenced by pirate seas and by the deer or antelopes of the forest. By affinity, if not, directly, through

Sea Gypsies

suggestion. Seas of the lateen sail, for the junk has sailed here from the China Seas. The war canoes, with foam at their prow, are oared upon another ocean. Here, in a storm, a huge junk has been shivered on the reefs. And, on a lacquered noon, the lateen sails have often come and gone. The water towns are upon the far shore; floating cities of the sampan with their own joss houses and their dens of infamy. Thousands of souls are born, and die, upon the river. Beyond these islands it is the China Seas; so that their Southern winds are from the Pacific, but the weather can change and blow down to them from Bantam China or Cochin. The Malay seas, the haunt of Malay pirates. Beside Borneo, but the archipelagos lie from here to Honolulu. This is the last mainland, for Borneo is big enough to be the terra firma, so that the Sulu Islands are between several worlds, and it is here in obscure corners that fishing villages are built on stilts into the sea and every conceit of seafaring finds expression along the shores. For the seas could be said to be more fertile than the land. They are more punctual than the cornfields, and have not to be tilled or sown.

Here, then, are the Sea Gypsies, round and about Sibutu, the nearest of the Sulu Islands to North Borneo. The southernmost of all the Philippines. The Sea Gypsies are born in the sailing canoe and pass their lives in it. Having no villages, nor houses upon land. Their sails are made of matting, and they know the ins and outs of all the winds, how and when they freshen and exhilarate from isle to isle. Or creep, turtle footed, as though they trailed in weeds. There are the steady winds that, month after month, would speed you out to ocean, and offer no return. Rare winds, once in a lifetime, that break the laws and blow back whence they came. A North wind breathing out of the South, in prelude to an earthquake and a tidal wave, when an island, like Krakatoa, could be blown out of the bed of ocean. They do

Sea Gypsies

not even pitch the tents. They are wanderers upon the seas. Their stolen food is there for all to steal. And their sea voyages are mostly made by night. Dawn comes to meet them upon another shore, rising like naked Venus out of her pearly shell, and wafting to land upon the catspaw calm in the opalline or milky waters. Where else could you find Gypsies walking upon the coral reef? Or their naked children paddling upon the rocks? What signal or indication will they leave behind them to guide their friends? Broken coral stems piled up into a pagan altar? A mound of oyster shells? And with what intent?

That the dappled herds—only they are dipped with gold and vermilion and deep blue—have moved away? That the golden fin no longer waves above the sand? Sometimes, like the Gypsies, they have destroyed just for destruction's sake. A coral pool has been entirely pillaged. The fronds and coral stems have been chipped down with the hammer. Or so it would seem. The broken shells, from which their inmates have been gouged away, float upon the calm, as sordid as the ship's refuse upon which the seagulls feed. They are like the cracked eggshells that the cuckoo has thrown down from the nest. It is, of course, in hyperbole that we call them Sea Gypsies. They are a tribe who have taken to the waters. But like breeds like; and there are points of similarity in the nomads of the coral reefs. They move by stealth. The fraternity do not meet by chance. They are liars and dissimulators. And they will spread false news. They will come ashore at some village, bringing triton or cowrie shells hidden in a piece of matting. By fire of personality they barter these for other things; and, always, the purchaser loses in the bargain. And they are off to sea before he knows this. That contrast between the Gypsies on the road and the motor car that passes them, or the aeroplane overhead, is present here in the difference between this naked poverty and the primal colours

Embarkation with the Areöis

of the coral sea. There is no taint upon the fishes or the sea-shells. Was there, once, a golden age when *Cypraea aurantia* was as common as the cockle shell? Has the race perished? Or were they, purposely, made few in number? If they show themselves, they will be stolen. In this they are blond children whom the Gypsies kidnap.

And there are lights and music. It is the embarkation. Men and women and young girls climb, laughing, into the canoes. There are many farewells; but no tears, for they will come back again. It is but a journey from island to island, and the wind will carry them all night. No need to use the oars; or more than dip a hand into the milky waters. It cools the pulse. For the night is warm; and there is music without end.

The Areöi Society, in sixty or seventy canoes, take the sunset wind and are gone. But we go with them. It does not matter where. As long as there is music, and at dawn and all night through we have the scents of the paradisaal islands. And more than music. Or that much more which music brings. For there is much else besides; and we would talk of it in our own symbols. What is there in the colour of a skin? These are the Tahitians, and the women are no darker than Sicilians. The Sicilienne could be danced here. Forty or fifty Siciliennes promised long ago, and unfulfilled. By the net of waters. Against the netted foam. But not the Sicilienne alone. That measure must mingle with the other music. As dew falls, even out upon the waters.

We will not exaggerate the beauty of the songs; but, as with all music, it is what it seems to be. And we will have it in our idiom. This is a troupe of players and comedians, with flowers at the wrist and neck, and in coronals of flowers that will keep fresh until the morning. This is the primal world in decadence. And there are parallels in all the full blown flowers of decay. Music, itself, is first and last of the arts. If

Embarkation with the Areöis

ever there comes a lull, listen, and you will hear the conch shell blown in the prow and at the helm! That is primitive music. It is, thus, the waggons or the moving tents are kept together. It is the long horn of the shepherds in the mountains: the bucium¹ that echoes along the valleys.

Dew falls upon the sea trumpet. Dusky goddesses, in plenty, dip their wrists into the water. You could see a dark hand below a moonlit wave. And the goddesses, or Colum-bines, are in gowns of calico. Many of them wear the scarf or handkerchief of the rumba dancer. Or the snow white shaggy dresses that we saw. Others wear dryad blue: and are naked to the waist. A lute is held in a hand of amber—for we would have it a lute—and amber fingers touch the strings. What shade of petal are the lips that sing? A shell ornament glitters at a shadowed ear. The figure is a smoky column rubbed with rose and jasmine oil. It is rare to meet with this upon the waters, as the armada moves above the madrepores and knocks at mullions into which the moonlight falls. For all night long it is the coral reef.

Who would not disembark upon this dazzling white strand? And watch these shadows become living girls and women? Here! Ah! here, the Sicilienne can begin. But we do not call it that. This is the youth of the world and there are no complications. So it may be many other things besides. How can it be a Sicilienne with waist and breasts of amber? With a body rubbed yellow with turmeric? And another smells of sandalwood. Like the opening of a little box or casket. But a pillar, none the less, of naked sandalwood. Another has stained her face with a scarlet dye, but it is no more than rouge upon her skin of cloves. And her limbs and body are not altered by it.

Such are the dryads whom we watched beneath the boughs.

¹ This is the Romanian name for the bronze trumpets, eight or ten feet long, blown by the Wallachian shepherds.

Embarkation with the Arëöis

But the men are actors or musicians. Some wear their feather helmets in the moonlight. In a moment we will have dance and pantomime. Where are the moonlit currant bushes? Like those bunches that are dipped in sugar. No! no! it is not that. And here are neither asphodel nor myrtle. Not ilex: nor the tamarisk. These are the South Seas. What is fanciful is not architecture but the structure of the shells. Can we have the mime of the nautilus; or of the shell of Venus? For we see this as a huge composition of goddesses or women bathing. But upon the coral shore. That is the difference. There is this much in the colour of a skin. It is thus, and thus, that the moral contagion spreads throughout society. But no one dies of it. We are alive but once; and in this mood would pass our lives, strolling from one place or island to another.

Book V



Seven Scenes



I

Feast in the Bean Fields

We slept in the clothes we wore yesterday, and wake up on a seraphic morning. It does not matter when or where.

What scents are blowing? Coming out of the bean field. Not morning hyacinth; nor nightscented stock. No more than the common bean field. While the full moon sets into the shoulder of the hill. The scent has something of the hyacinth, but not so sickly sweet. Hyacinth, in legend, was a youth loved by the sun and wind, who on his death became a galaxy or constellation. And it is a torch or pyramid, a head of clusters.

The other flower we named, nightscented stock, blows only in the night. Why is there no nightflower called for Cassiope, the Ethiopian Queen who was made a Southern constellation, which had thirteen stars called cassiopes? The nightscented stock should be the cassiope. Nearly hidden, but of Southern fragrance, breathing honey, sweet thurible of dusk and dawn. Not in this dove-throat morning of the flowering bean fields. For they are nothing rare or precious. Persons who cannot read or write might look for bean fields at the gates of heaven. Blowing, too, outside the walls of hell. For torment. It is an attar of common earth, a distillation of the soil. Nobody can

Walking by the Edge

pass it by. Old men and women at a breath of it are reminded of their dewy youth, when they rose at four in the morning and went into the fields. The young are suddenly aware of it, as of the first honey in the curls of clover, and for ever after will remember that balm upon the morning. After rain. While there is still wet upon the leaves and flowers. It must have rained while we were sleeping.

And the bean fields have no population until the evening. You could stay there all day, and not be disturbed. It will be so hot that you have to lie under the hedges. Nothing but a magpie takes the balmy air. And comes back again, again, and must be building near this scented bower. All the noon there is nothing. Nothing until evening. When, for a moment or an hour we have forgotten the flowering bean field, because the scent of it fades upon the heat.

Why did I say we had slept in the clothes we wore yesterday? And that it does not matter when or where. The hills have no names; or none that we would know. Why mention Cassiope? Nightscented stock: Queen or regent of the dew-dropping South. Ah! the feast in the bean field. For suddenly it breathes again like an intoxication. We must have slept; and wake in the flowering bean land. It has no frontiers, but is a country or continent to itself. Smelling of honey. But of its own honey, and tending to the South. More and more persons halt at the edge of it, and step into its kingdom. They are coming back from other fields, but get a breath of it. The August lime trees are more late and Northern. Besides, they are lovely in themselves. They close the eyes to other things.

But the bean field is nothing in itself. It is a humble flower, hardly a flower at all, but in millions beyond counting. Sown from the seed. The black and white bean flower. Oh! it is honeyed and of milling softness. It is like music, in that it means many things. Everything, or nothing. It could remind one of the summer sea, in July, sitting upon the cliffs. For

Black and White Bean Flower

the sea breaks from somewhere. It has another shore. But many here will not have seen the ocean. What could they say? That it is the swallow's wing, the cuckoo's call—for it is calling now—or the crest of the hoopoe? Living things from far away that, by their return, tell us the earth is pleasant ; but make the mind wander with them for their love of summer. And another and another breath. It could make one laugh, or weep.

II

Cities of the Lion Gate

There is a straight profile upon the wall. The stones are giant blocks, some rectangular, some polygonal like the section of a honeycomb. But they fit exactly, and are dressed without mortar. A cyclopæan wall. Or it could be a temple of the sun. In fact, a cyclopæan town. Asleep, or dug up by the excavators; were it not for the sentinel and his shadow. And the smell of wood fires smouldering in many hearths. Mere ashes, for midnight is long past. These are the long hours of the morning. Clytemnestra sleeps; so does her son Orestes. As sure as they were alive, once, they are asleep to-night. The tethered goat throws a shadow, too. A cock crows; and someone, who dreams fitfully, stirs upon the floor.

The shadow is of a helmet, and a nose and forehead in one line. A helmet with a horsetail crest, and a hand that holds a spear. Never more than the spear shaft can be seen, for the blade is broken where the wall ends off. The lower part of the body, or its shadow, spreads across the paving stones. For the pavement is formed of cyclopæan stones. This paved road is an ascent for chariots into the citadel. In the moonlight the ruts worn by the wheels are to be seen.

But watch him for a little while! For the moon will climb

Double Sentinel

higher in the sky. His shadow will alter. It will be apparent that he shakes his spear. But the main drama is in his helmet and his hand. And, after a while it moves, and as do all shades resolves into itself; and then turns into the attitude again. Standing upon the cyclopæan wall. But there is something formidable in the moonlight. It is metallic, as though it had the gleam of metal. Not steel. This is a night of bronze or copper. The moon is behind him. And suddenly the sentinel is in double shadow, like a statue that has a pair of shadows, this way and that, slanting from its pedestal. Like a statue giving forth an oracle. And the shadows appear to be thrown, or loom upon, the wall. They come up suddenly and spread upon the stones. The light is so clear that the lichen can be seen where its parhelions are cut into by the edge of shade. But the limestone blocks are so regular that they make a pattern, a design that recedes, for the wall is not quite vertical or perpendicular, it is sloped for defence. The other wall is in complete darkness. It is upon its summit that the sentinel is standing.

And now all the dogs are barking. It is the hour of ghosts. Some in the town are awake who should be sleeping. It is the hour to go stealthily and lift the latch. But we cannot stay in this one spot to watch and listen. We have only this hour or these few moments. Come away! The moonlight touches Tiryns, which is an older town than this. We will come down into the plain. For there are other cyclopæan towns, and there is no need to be particular. We would see them, one and all. They are, indeed, stone villages. We should not call them towns; but a few hundred persons make a kingdom and a capital. And many legends.

What is that huge black flower? It is the morning iris, which is speckled grey and white, but in the moonlight it could be the black asphodel. It is the flower of death. And another and another growing on the bank, which will be

Down to Tiryns

dappled and glorious in the morning. No other flowers are to be seen. But there are great stones, and thorns and spines upon the road. And, again, the ruts of chariot wheels. Kings and warriors must pass continually this way. With a noise of iron or copper. How would we describe it? For the wheels have rims of metal. It is not the creaking ox-cart but a shirring, far and near, a flail down in the cornland with galloping hooves before it. And it dies upon the wind.

To have heard it in this moonlight! And that could happen. But we will lie down near to the oats or rye. The nymphs cry out aloud upon the mountains, for we are living in a legend. Do you not hear it? And again? There is a voice, too, among the reeds. How much has been; and how much more is still to come! Who are the cyclopaean builders? Who first trained the vine and dug the olive grove? No one can tell you. But it is light already upon the limestone cliffs, upon the crags and meadows where the nymphs dance. Where the blue flower bells nod out of the rocks. What colour are the nymphs? They are mortal, but immortal. We must not think of them with golden hair. Do they come down into the orchard or the cornfield? Or stoop to the wild strawberry as though to tie their sandal? Or wander, or repose, beneath the plane tree?

For it is loud daylight, now. Another young morning, even in the dark mouth of the dungeon. A goatherd is out early, and shivers in his sheepskin. In many houses fire is put to the dried sticks. The pitcher comes up cold out of the well. The old are the first to awaken. Young persons sleep for a little longer. They have all their lives before them.

And now, unseen ourselves, we will walk up to the Lion Gate. They are, in fact, stone lionesses. And we are to suppose there is a Lion Gate in every cyclopaean town, or its equivalent, for this is the pattern of them all. And of the art of the megalith, for the stones have bred the lion. It is a doorway of monoliths. The hand of man is still generous and big. They



THE LION GATE AT MYCENÆ

The Pair of Lionesses

are a pair of lionesses, one out of each stone, reared upon their hindlegs, with their front paws upon the base of a column so that they stand face to face. But their heads have already fallen off. The broken stones are lying in the dust. No one cares. The world is too new to be concerned with yesterday. And the arts of creation are of the future, not the past. Near to them are heaped a whitening ox skull and the jawbone of an ass. But there are other cities of the Lion Gate; while we may imagine cities of the dolphin, of the eagle, of the golden corn stooks. All emblems, or symbols. Of pride, or person. Of the fist of power.

Nothing but the pillar and the pair of lionesses. No more is needed. It is enough. There are grand and simple themes inhabiting the air. All kinds of poems, too, but not written down. Any more than the carved lions need their manes. They are superb without them. They are grand and epical. The Lion Gate is magnificent in this time of flowers: in the long months of the weeds: in snow, when there is ice upon the trumpet mouth: when it pours with rain: most of all, when there is thunder. We have known that, coming up out of the Argive plain. Did not the nymphs cry out aloud upon the mountains? Did we not, in the moonlight, hear someone move inside a house? Did we not give names? Does it not thunder, and grow leaden and more leaden above the corn-fields? Is that not the noise of chariot wheels, and the breath of someone coming, like a cold wind out of nowhere?

III

The Leonids

My father, when a little boy, was woken up one night, and dressed, and taken to the window. Upon a summer evening, I think, in 1867. It was to watch a shower of meteors fall into the sea. They may have driven in a carriage down to the foreshore, or along the esplanade. I do not know. That would seem more likely, upon a summer night, than to stay at a window.

The shower of stars had been announced beforehand by the newspapers. To take place for three nights together. And never again in a lifetime? Once more I am not sure. Something tells me that it happens every eighty years, or so; that it is nearly impossible to see it twice; that the Leonids are coming near again. There will be another summer evening, I believe it is in August, when the three day spectacle is at its climax. What does it portend? And what does it mean to have a lifetime dashing in fire across the windowpane, and falling out of the night sky into the sea? How wonderful and terrible it would be to see it twice, in the beginning and the end! How full of meaning; and in a sense how meaningless! For their fire is extinguished before they reach the earth. Except for their punctual timing, they have no bearing upon us. Unless there is truth in the horoscope, and fortunes can be told.

Shower of Stars in 1867

The Leonids fell on this occasion out to sea. I do not know the exact nature of their display; whether they came at hazard from all quarters of the heavens; like pouring rain; or one at a time as though a hand shook the bough. More probably it was like a hundred shooting stars, so fast that the eyes could not follow them. I have been told of this since childhood and cannot remember now whether they fell outside the atmosphere, or really reached the sea and spattered on the waves. It is possible I imagined that, for I have met no astronomers nor anyone whom I could ask. All I know is that they were seen by everyone and will come again. Not, it cannot be, the same falling meteors; but they must derive from a fountain of fire that flows for ever and is, itself, moving through space.

Upon an August evening in 1867, and again soon! The discrepancy or little likelihood is obvious. How curious to stand at the same window, but the house is deserted now, and watch fire fall for the second time across the Valley into the sea! Then, it was the hand of God; now, it will be the Great Anarch!

But the spectacle, if it is a clear night, will be no less tremendous. The Leonids are heavenly bodies. They are fiery particles that vanish utterly in space. Nothing is left but the memory of them. When we consider the extraordinary bodies seen in the sky during historic and all prehistoric time, meteors with tails stretching half across the firmament, maned heads, phantoms in the form of golden swords or arrows, and so forth, and if we accept that, rightly or wrongly, the majority of the human race have acknowledged the influence or the portent in such things, then the Leonids are of plain symbolic meaning. The name given to them is significant of this. They are the signs of genius. Young and ardent spirits, for they are quenched so quickly. They are burned up before their time, and by a fire within themselves. Long ago, the portents were

Dwellings of the Leonids

more visible. Out of our teeming millions few, if any, can dash themselves like torches upon the ground. But, taken through all time, if not falling like a shower, it is at least as though a hand—whose hand?—shook them from the branches.

What, in fact, are the Leonids? We do not know; but we can create them for ourselves. In the first place, by listening to the music of their name. The Leonids are the young or little of the lion. A name, also, for a dazzling display. They are of tawny or golden colour, which may mean many things, according to their race. For it is an universal symbol. Kings in golden armour, such as are buried underneath the hill? It should mean much more than that. They are divers or acrobats of the golden skies. And we are to imagine them, since all things tangible have an earthly body, with long hair—is that not implicit in their name?—and clothes that fit tightly to the frame. Spangled they may be, but it does not impede their action. Their dwelling is a tent or hut beside the megalith. No other building, made with hands, is timeless. So they live in the green plain of the dolmen or stone circle. When the stars of the morning sing together, it is they. For the dawn is neither for young children, nor old men. Figures in human form, but never in the act of walking. They recline, or slumber, or go quickly; for, like Mercury or Harlequin, they must be volatile and moving. They are daemons or fiery spirits. Above them, the starry sky is in continual display, ever cloudless, to the zenith, and all round, for there are no hills. The only shadow is the white megalith.

Here is the arena for the chariot race. Or for the funeral games. All round it is smooth driving ground. The horses are white stallions. And from this eminence the constellations can be seen in movement, but never swifter than the fingers of a clock. Even when they fall in fire. The whirlwind is a figure with outstretched arm who appears to write his name.

The Falling Stars

One of the winds of space who blows between the planets. And now the word comes, and the Leonids fall from heaven through the night. They reach the ocean; or are snuffed out above the mountains. But they presage events: or lives of promise. Here are, yet, no cottage windows where they can be seen past the honeysuckle or between the lilies. Neither the slum, nor the palace has been built as yet. But they fall past the sheepfold. Once, in a lifetime, the man with a scythe looks back over his shoulder and sees the Leonids in an empty heaven dropping towards the cornfields. And, when he reaches the village, the old women have brought out their grandchildren to watch the mystery. No one wants to sleep that night, except the puking babe.

They fall so violently that they could strike the fishing nets. But, where the boats are, we are told next morning they fell much further out. And all listened, but could hear no sound. In another district, persons come back a week later from the forests and describe to us what they have seen. In the huge plain they fell far off, and at the same time, it thundered in the mountains. In another place nothing at all was seen or heard. Someone, at a deed of darkness, saw those golden lights and put down his hand. All over the world men listened, but heard nothing. The meteors are aloof, and burning only for themselves. There is no other meaning. The daemons, who are snuffed out so soon, were formed for the display. It is all in the flame and fury.

IV

Poseidonia

This is a feast of columns in a cool place above the sea. It is hot, already, and will be cloudless. But the mood will change. There are the mountains and the air. Do you hear the ocean? Only now and then, as wave after wave breaks far below.

A light shines from the acanthus and the myrtle. And the same light dwells in the Doric columns, not of Pentelic, but of a local marble, the colour of dawn or sunset, for this is a temple of the winds and air above the ocean. It is vowed to Poseidon. Upon a cape or promontory; a sanctuary with Doric pillars to all sides, but upon a site so chosen that it belongs more to the sea than to the land.

Is not this the cyclamen? Like a rose of the woodland low down upon the stones. It has stayed late until the summer. With a rose-pink flower and little marbled leaves. As thick as violets at the tree foot. That marble is the colour of the rosy cyclamen. For it is early morning; not yet the summer of the dog rose, but a morning of late spring, glaucous and shining beneath the cedar trees. Too late for the crocus. There is light upon the marble, like the rosy gleam upon the seashell.

This is a country place in spite of that. You may find a

The Wanderings of Ceres

honeycomb close to the thyme. And the land is inhabited. There are a hundred white houses, two or three together, upon the hills or down on the shore. Fishermen or husbandmen; but not a village, nor a town. So that they come from every direction for the festival. And all day. Beginning at noon. A team of white oxen have climbed, already, to the temple and fresh garlands are being woven to hang upon their horns. They lie in the shade near to the cyclamen; huge pastoral gods, for they have that calmness and fatuity. Snowy mountains: statues formed of milk which feed upon the grass and herb. Which, godlike, turn their heads, with level brows and great dark eyes which are quite limpid and expressionless. And now the goats are driven in. The day of the shepherd burns towards the sunset.

The day of the dolphin, too. There could be drifts of cyclamen upon the ocean.

But the husbandmen come in who will dance for Ceres. She is still grieving for the rape of Proserpine, her daughter, who was gathering flowers. It is the beginning of the harvest. And Ceres has been seen wandering as a countrywoman, mounted upon an ox, with a basket on her left arm and a hoe upon her shoulder. Her hat of straw, with wide brims, was plaited at a cottage near the reeds. She bought it at the cottage door, an evening or two ago, coming down with a sunburnt face from teaching Triptolemus how to graft his plums and apples.

It was but yesterday. Only yesterday, or a few days ago, that Pluto, the ravisher, struck the earth with his trident and opened a passage for himself and Proserpine, out of the flowers into the infernal regions. They will dance here for Ceres. It was Ceres who taught them how to plough the earth, how to sow and reap the corn, here in Attica. And in a blue gown, with floury hands, how to bake bread. They will dance and use coarse language. Words learnt, as it could be, from

Dances at the Poseidonia

ram or bull. It was only this that made the goddess smile when she mourned for her daughter.

There will be a dance, also, of young boys in armour.

But youths crowned with millet, or in crowns of olive, have begun to dance the cordax. They lead out the virgins in snowy peplums; or like Spartan maidens naked to the waist. It is the shepherd's dance, when he runs headlong into his flock; and time is given by the beating of the drum. No other instrument than the pipe and drum. Down below, there is a mimic naval battle. They sweep the harp to the measure of the oars. Later, there is a dance in honour of Poseidon, when the athletes of ocean climb up to the temple and join in the cordax. They are sailors, and fishermen who spear the polyp. Men with nets and floats, who lay down their tackle on the temple steps.

Light dies slow upon Cape Sunium. It lingers on the marble columns and in the cyclamen. There is a rosy glow upon the white skins of the oxen. The whole firmament could be a dove throat of cyclamen shading into blue. Who has seen such an evening fade into the night? Mars shines evilly out of an empty heaven. And the moon rises, and the white sails go down.

Sicilienne

The music of the *Sicilienne* is thus and thus. Memories of flowers and faces, while we were young; and our imaginings. Dances of the nymphs and hours, hand linked in hand, neither gay nor solemn, but which bring tears. This is written upon Midsummer Day of 1941 for all Elysian fields with Hell above and below, and to every side.

But to the plain of Enna where Proserpine was carried off by Pluto; and the hounds lost their scent amid the fragrance of the flowers.

Dances of fritillaries and columbines. Lilies of the chequer board in tessellated gowns. Meleagris of the water meadows in her mottled dress; and the green fritillary like a dancer in the mists of morning, a dryad changed into a flower; crown imperials, who are figurants not dancers, and carry in their red or yellow bells the stigmata of tears; mountain fritillaries of Lebanon or black Kamschatka.

In the fields of Enna we meet many forms wandering. Here is the shadow of the rose that grew upon the wall. That made the senses tremble. But not all, nor most of them, are so potent. There can be a vision in a railway station. Ah! that belongs to where the ilex grows. And, here and now, the earth could open. Proserpine wandered, as we know, with her

In the Fields of Enna

women gathering flowers. That, and no more, is intended in the music. But listen! and look again!

Here are the columbines. The tying of the ballet shoe with one foot upon a kitchen chair. The fingers and slight wrist that tied the shoe lace. Her legs and the skirt of columbine. And no features; for her face could as well be masked. More columbines. Not her alone. Child dancers, for some are little more than children. It is before the flower is fully opened. At the wheel of a two-seater. Why not? That can be as beautiful as upon horseback; or in the woods of Rowaleyn. Upon a May evening, when blood fell on the anemone and the compact of tragedy was sealed and signed. But, always, it is the one columbine.

And she brings us to the lilies. How could there not be lilies in the plain of Enna? In hidden places; and, of a sudden, sheaf after green sheaf, with spires of bells drooping as if drowsed of their scent in that miraculous underworld of their own making. They grow at the mouth of Hell, where the earth will open. They are flowers to throw down upon a virgin's body. Pluto and Proserpine will have passed among the lilies. Their shades last trod the earth in this enchanted spot. The lilies droop in the Sicilienne; they ever hang their heads and turn away their eyes. Or hide themselves, so that their sweetness is like dew upon the leaf. Here are the lily-silvered vales of Enna. Linger and delay in them; there will be no peace again on earth like this. Although it is still daylight the nightingale is singing. Weep, then! And weep; all of you! Weep for the lengthening shadows!

Here are more phantoms. Of a face before a mirror. Trying her necklaces, one by one, and wondering if she looks older. But not always thus. In a new hat of spring or summer fashion. At a hand glass, which is a theme for tapestry, for the longer should be the labour for such a fleeting moment. The beauties of Enna are before their mirrors, all. At their

Nymphs of Enna

dressing tables. In windows that look out upon the flowering fields. One is naked after her bath. Phryne, whom we saw naked on the seashore, while she combed her hair. Another, who remembers the flowering oleanders. This one, in full maquillage for the battery of cameras, painted like the girls of Astarte. That is a sacred ritual. How lovely a wrist of cinnamon, if no more than that, and the smoothness of a turban! Not only for its folds, but because it makes the face so round and young. Here, as in every legend, are Indians and negresses among the nymphs. And young persons of the subtler shades. Confections of chocolate and cream; the clove, the jessamine, the amber. With a lute of tortoiseshell; or turning on the gramophone. In a gown of flowered silk; or, simply, in a bath towel.

Now: or a thousand: or ten thousand years ago. In the street among the motor buses. In the grotto where the Queen of Carthage slept, during the storm, and the hunting horns rang, near and far, through the Sicilienne. Or last summer, in the lovely but terrible month of June. When a mother was swinging her little boy, a year ago to-day, under the beech tree, near to his own garden. And it was late, and time, the last time, that he should be put to bed. Did I not say, 'Weep! Weep!' They were moments that will never come again. He will have grown and become different. At least we knew, or have known, the flowers of the Sicilienne. In the attic, sitting at the sewing machine, while we watched columbine as seamstress, and summer music of comedy came in through the trees. Familiar tunes, more haunting in that moment. How much and how little do they mean, on this Midsummer Day before the dog rose! While the winds shake in anticipation.

Listen, while you may, to the Sicilienne! This is the season or the month of flowers. Listen, for the last moment! And look up! That is the lightning.

VI

Habanera

Suddenly, it has become cooler. A convent bell clangs noisily. And from all over the town there is the sound of shutters being thrown back upon the walls. Soon, the whole city is in movement.

The megalith is in the museum, which was once a monastery.

A mule team comes past with much jingling of harness, their light, quick step being that of dancers who walk round to take up positions for the adagio. Inside the carriage there are ladies with white mantillas and white fans.

Listen! listen! the habanera is beginning. Upon the violin and marimba. A marimba band plays early in the morning, while the gardenia is waxy pale, and again now when it is fading. Here are so many flowers; and the jacaranda, like a chestnut tree with blue chestnut candles.

But a hundred habaneras play in the streets. They are dancing in open booths and under the trees. How languorous and slow the measure! Along the Prado, or the Alameda!

The music quickens with a sudden turn. All habaneras are not the same. There are the vanilla-pale, the chocolate and soft coffee. Clear eggshell, and magnolia petal. Many sorts of habaneras.

Rhythm of the Habanera

It may be more beautiful as distant music. When the whole city goes habanera with a lazy rhythm. Rocking and lulling, with a lolling of the leaves. A swaying of the lights beneath the distant trees. Could it be a cool wind blowing in from the sea? There is this—and how much more, as well—in that nostalgic timing.

And another band begins, much nearer. We could listen—and we have to—all night through. The plumed monoliths are sleeping. And how many more in the forests, lying on their sides. They had not this sophistication upon their summer nights. Listen! listen! it is dying down. Farewell and adieu to you, Spanish ladies! Farewell and adieu to you, ladies of Spain.

VII

Ball-Game of the Northern Sky

The name of this festival is Citlaltlactli in the Mayan tongue.

Indian astronomers have seen with the naked eye the movements of the planets. In courses which can be foretold and plotted. Some fly with golden wings: and some are led in chains.

Hence the ball-game.

The priests and nobles are dressing up in feathers. They have deformed heads, bound after birth between wooden boards so that the skull grows upwards, in elongation. Their foreheads slope to a peak, the nose and forehead in one slanting line. And many of them, from childhood, have been made to squint. It is a mark of beauty. Their feather cloaks are put upon their shoulders. Macaw cloaks of macaw colours: red, and blue and yellow. But, last, they lift the plumed head-dresses of quetzal feathers, bird of paradise of the mock Indies, which comes only from Chiapas and Guatemala. Green tail feathers which are fixed into a wooden framework. They are light wooden frames, carved like the Mayan hieroglyph, in the symbols of a secret language. Of Mayan convention: with a socket for the plumes. Sometimes, they are simple feather crowns. But the quetzal feathers spring out

Ball-game at Chichen Itza

like a flail of plumes. They are three feet long; and lift and dance upon the wind, with a particular sound and motion. It is for this, and their colour, that they are so valued.

At dawn, a live macaw is sacrificed in a fire of copal. During its torment a cloud of parrots are let loose from cages.

The court for the ball-game is immensely long with flat-topped walls which are crowded with the feather cloaks and headdresses. There are two stone rings high up on the walls; and a hard rubber ball must be driven through them, hit by the players' hands, or from their padded hips. For all we know, the different athletes may be called by planets' names. It is a sacred ritual, and given this importance, their movements are symbolical. They are male and female, actors or masquers of a cosmic drama.

One team is ploughing, and they leave a golden furrow. At moments, in imagery, it is another Indian game in which grains of maize are thrown into the air. A whole constellation is thus symbolized. Or an empty quarter of the heavens, where there is a faint nebula and nothing more. Down near the horizon; over the ocean, it may be, where they must tread the waters with their golden sandals. Their whole movements are to be compared to the solar system; or their game is with a satellite; with the moon goddess, or it could be the rings of Saturn. There are hunters, by Mayan names, who roam the Northern sky. Stars to mark the beginning of the agricultural year; feasts of fishermen and bee-keepers. Feasts of the household gods, when all furniture and utensils are dyed the sacred blue; and of the cacao groves, when dogs are sacrificed and blue iguanas.

But this is a game, and there are a winning and a losing side. It is not a dance or feast; but a contest which has an end. The decision is with the gods. No human skill can oppose them. So visible is their interference that it is a case of love or hate. In fact, a mimic warfare. In the result, the

Death of the Vanquished

players are warriors or slaves. And that is not enough. No one, thus branded, can be allowed to live. They must die.

It can be seen on a bas-relief at Chichen Itza. A sword of obsidian is put into the captain's hand. One by one they kneel before him, beginning with the captain of the losing side. The victor must be tired and trembling. And, in an ecstasy, or hallucination, they are put to death. All are difficult to kill. Their arms are bound behind them. Meantime, the nobles and astronomers make sacrifices of their own blood, cutting their lips or cheeks, and passing straws through them. These straws, like sugar canes with blood in them, are heaped in baskets and put upon the altar. While others take knotted cords, which are strung with thorns, and draw them through their tongues.

So ends the ball-game of the Northern sky.

Book VI

Miming of the Golden Cornstalks

Book VI

Miming of the Golden Cornstalks

I

The clock strikes six. It is a summer afternoon. A square in a little town on the borders of Galicia.¹ The high wooden houses with pointed gables are painted white or wild rose pink; yellow as primroses or powder blue. A young girl looks out of a window. A moment later she appears in a doorway and comes out into the square. Immediately the sunlight bursts into flower. That is to say we have music. This hanging of the golden air with flowers is like a seemingly innocent, but artful music. Its prelude is the opening of the waltz, the preliminary beats to give the rhythm. When the tune comes, it is so familiar we can scarce believe our ears.

The young girl is about fifteen years old; and in this peasant land of many petticoats wears, audaciously, a short ballet skirt, tights, and ballet shoes. It is the convention. And her hair is dressed, formally, to go with it. But listen to the waltz! The waltz of Coppelia! And watch how she makes sure that she is not seen, and runs across the square, through and across the music, as it were, pausing opposite, before a certain

¹ For the full synopsis of 'Coppelia', see *Complete Book of Ballets*, by C. W. Beaumont, Putnam & Co., London, 1937, pp. 593-600. We have quoted from this by permission of Mr. Beaumont.

Air of the Automaton

house, poised on the waltz, and looking up into a window! A second young girl sits there, and apparently, she reads a book. She never moves: and never lifts her head. The other, in time to the music, makes many signs to her. But in vain.

But the drama becomes more interesting. A young man enters, as though to sing a serenade. In every movement and gesture it is obvious he is a lover. Also, by the pantomime, that the first young girl is jealous of the second. Just now, he only sees his sweetheart at the window. The other, whom we watch, hides in the shadow.

At this moment, but only for an instant, an old man in a musty coat and wig appears at a low window of the mysterious house. Part of its mystery, in fact, is this haunting but banal waltz, coming from nowhere. The old man moves away from the window, and the young lover at once runs forward and kisses his hand to the girl above.

Then, something curious happens. We hear, from within that room, a little mechanical and tinkling air, in time to which the girl seems to raise her head and make some gesture of reply; but then, abruptly and jerkily, sits down again.

And now the door opens and the old man comes out, stick in hand, with his hat upon his head. He is off, on some business, into the town. With a huge key he turns to lock the door behind him; but, in another moment, has dropped it on the ground. He is Coppelius, the toymaker: Doctor Bartolo: or Doctor Hunius, the dear old Balt, whose garden at the back of his house is full of plums and apples.

We hear that little tinkling tune again; but there is no one moving at the window. We are living, none the less, in a world of beloved shadows and enchantments. What magic in their names! How much of romance rings in our ears, and tingles on our skins, now that there are no theatres playing! We said Doctor Bartolo; so the girl could be his ward,

Waltz-Song of Olympia

Rosina. In another moment we will hear the serenade, sung by Lindoro, for Rosina knows Count Almaviva only by that name. But listen to the waltz! And look at the painted wooden houses! This town is not Seville.

Or the doll or automaton sitting at the window could be the lovely Olympia, made by Spalanzani, with Coppélius helping. We shall see the doll-like movements of Olympia as she sings her song. Ah! how magical that banal music! Or it could be Giulietta, in Venice, with her lover, Peter Schlemihl, the man without a shadow, for he has given it in exchange to the sinister Dapertutto. Or again, Antonia, whose death was brought about by Doctor Mirakel, when he called up the ghost of her mother, who had been a famous singer, and bade her sing before her. The song, too, of Antonia where she accompanies herself upon the harp.

It is enough. There is no need for more.

We come back again into the square.

The ballerina runs after the butterfly, feigning to have seen nothing of the drama at the window. Frantz joins in and catches it, and pins it to his collar. This is Swanilda's moment. She tells him he has been unfaithful to her. Does he prefer Coppelia? He shakes his head. But Swanilda will not listen. She tells him she loves him no more.

The square, so the programme reads, fills with a happy crowd. The burgomaster makes an announcement. A bell has been presented to the town by the lord of the manor, and there is to be a festival because of this. Young couples are to be married, and will be given dowries. From noon to midnight there will be dancing. It is our opportunity.

Now for the pigheaded peasants. And we leave the world of Leo Delibes for that of Dvořák, or Béla Bartók. This is a little town, remember, on the borders of Galicia! Now for the redowa, polka, dumka, furiant. Upon the borders of Galicia ;

Village Bands

somewhere, that could mean, near to so many other lands. Music in the Magyar rhythm. We shall listen to the csárdás. Our subject is the peasant world between the Black Sea and the Baltic, in form of a divertissement, for the sake of brevity, or an air with variations, after which we come back within the conventions of the stage, and behold the Miming of the Golden Cornstalks.

We will have dances of spinners and harvesters. That happy crowd are the occasion, as though it is only necessary for them to change their dresses. It is a summer evening among the groves of sunflowers; in the mountains, the High Tatra or Carpathians; and along the plain. Not in any one place; but, for convenience, in a square in a little town. The whole of this peasant world is sublimated in their dances. Their primitive beliefs and legends; those, especially, that are pre-Christian and come down to them from pagan times. Not that, in bucolic reckoning, it was so long ago. Where shall it be? Would you have the music and the Călușari dancers from Ca la Cinturoiă, near Craiova? It is better to be lost entirely, as though it is a holiday without guide or map. Only listen to the music, watch the spectacle: do not bother about time or place!

Here are the places of forgotten music. A village, a landscape, in a song. Or dance. The bagpipes, the cymbalon, the violin. Here the tunes are collected and written down. For every one saved how many more will have been forgotten! Abstractions of the sharp air in the mountains. Of the fiery plain: the haunted forest. Green rivers: fields of rye: images of the performing bear: village dramas: the maiden at the well: of the fair, with a thousand waggons and ten thousand horses: folk memories of when the Turks came by, and of the towers of skulls: of a young child eaten by the wolves: prophecies spoken by the jackdaw: princesses of the wainscoting: of the tree that spoke: of all birds and animals given words to say: and mere tunes which have no meaning but entrance or intoxicate in themselves, and linger in the memory.

The Călușari

Bare bones that clothe themselves with flesh. Airs that are archaic, and discordant in their harmonies. Played and sung according to the ancient mode, while sunset lit the white-washed walls. Pantomimes of fife and drum. Dances of the Dacians. Of the white shirt and Phrygian bonnet, worn at the carved and painted porch. For these primitive tunes are entire in their simplicity. Nothing can be taken from them. A catch from some broken instrument; and that is all. Without Gypsy ornament. Not needing the clashing of the Berecynthian rattle. The broken cymbalon is enough; and the violin and drum.

We reach the rustic scene and hear, in epitome, a little air. That contains the whole race. The same language may not be spoken a few miles away. It can be the pocket of a distant nation; or a whole people scattered in confusion among their enemies. It has the accent of its tongue or language. Part rhythm; and part intonation. And how magical the change of key! It is now it runs in the blood. It is the psychic turn from feminine to masculine. This is the magician's secret.

Now come the Călușari dancers with their hobby horse. They have fasted for several weeks, and their leader has kept a vow of silence. It is a dance of exorcism. A panic, or nameless fear, like that which routs the herds. It is the horned god who runs among the flock. At another village the god has come up from the field of rye. His name has been forgotten, but all know him. Or he hides like Vertumnus in the plum boughs; and must be tempted down.

There was once a witch who is, now, a long legged mare. What was the fox that looked in at the window? Which was the silver maiden in the stream, beneath the stone? Is every goddess dead? What of the gentle birch trees? There comes a sighing out of the orchard. It is too beautiful to be but rain. And look! the sunflowers do not bow their heads. Ah! now it steals along the ground, like something that would crawl up

Moonlit Hora

to our feet. It slips out of the branches. You can hear a door and window bang. It is within the house.

Some tunes come like a moment with half-closed eyes, in which instant inspiration descends. Their birth is from a sip of honey: not through long reflection. Ah! now it comes. A blind man, or one who cannot read music, may be the god-head. It is a sacred trance: in utter simplicity. And it ends, roughly and awkwardly. Did we not say these are the pig-headed peasants! Their music grunts among the acorns. And in the next moment, it is instinct with poetry. Unless we think of it as a run of numbers, found by divination. Village scenes and festivals far removed from anywhere, in the immense peasant lands.

Listen! that is a little csárdás. I have heard it upon the virginal, soft as a mouse's movements, but sunburnt as the plain. With a *glissando* at the end, as though upon the cymbalon. A little Children's Piece by Béla Bartók. How poignant are its turns and modulations!¹

Some of the tunes are dry and brittle as a wooden toy. But it articulates: it has joints that move. The melody is four-square, like the script of an antiphonal. It has no date or time. And it hardens into a portrait. There are tunes that can be like melodies worn inside out. And, suddenly, a form will catch fire. A rondo upon a folk tune is an example.² They are village scenes or tableaux, complete in themselves, with no external influence. All is in the timing, with no opportunity for expression; percussive or droning, like the village band. But always, sooner or later, the village fair.

At present, we are among the Dacians. How to bid farewell to the cosmogony of peasants! This is a moonlit hora in the time of the golden harvest. A hundred larks are singing in the cloudless sky. The black hats and long white shirts worn

¹ Played by Mrs. Gordon Woodhouse upon the virginal.

² Three Rondos upon a Folk Tune, by Béla Bartók, 1931.

Lands of the Rhapsody

outside their trousers, in the Wallachian fashion, make the hora Dancers akin to Pulcinella, but the music has style and rhythm of its own. It is danced in a circle, hand linked in hand; or the young men and the girls dance, side by side, as though it were a promenade, a ceremonial walk. Music and dancing are in *moto perpetuo*. They need never end. Till we hear the Ciocarla, which mounts and rises like the lark.¹

Here are performing bears from the Carpathians. That dance, but such music is intrinsic. It does not depend upon the execution. But there is a tune, here and there. Distant villages are the most likely; or then, again, in the outskirts of some little town. So that there is no pattern by which they can be found. At the horse fair: or by the cemetery wall. At a wedding: or where the dead woman lies with her face uncovered. There is a song from among the rose trees, for it could be in Bulgaria within sight of Rhodope. Or out of the willow forests in the Danube delta. Far distant, are we not, from the borders of Galicia? In so many rhythms. And of so many nations. From all the great Balkan, far from the redowa and the furiant. We hear the gentle love songs of the Bosnians, savdelinkas of Turkish sort, from Sarajevo's gardens, in view of the plane tree and the minaret.

Villages near the Jugoslavian border show the influence of that proximity. The inhabitants, even, may be partly Serbian, and it is revealed in the women's costume with their full skirts and simple headdresses, consisting of no more than a shawl or handkerchief folded into a turban. At Décs, which is not far from the battlefield of Mohács, they wear pleated dresses without pattern, but daring in their colours; while at Alsónyék, in the same neighbourhood, it is cretonnes and chintzes, all of flowered pattern, like the milkmaids of pastoral poetry, and in fact, their milk pails are brightly painted. Here, in Southern Hungary, the folk music is rhap-

¹ Ciocarla is the name of a popular Romanian tune.

Mongols of Hatzeg

sodic in character, the land of Liszt's Second and Twelfth Hungarian rhapsodies with their frowning or heroic tunes in all their force and blatancy. Near to the scene of Turkish massacres, and of epic or dithyrambic import.

For a difference, here are the Pan pipes. The true syrinx only blown in the one region of the Danube, where cranes and pelicans populate the water meadows. Not music, but a comment or an interjection, though the tones are honeyed. Now and again there is a virtuoso on this instrument. But it has to be bird like. It leads and dominates: it interrupts. Not the sweet notes of the shepherd. But a river flowing into Tartary. It has the water qualities of that; and is not of the earth or air. And since it is inhuman, it is not archaic. It is from before history began.

But we will come down to the Banat. Where Romania was entered, formerly, from Yugoslavia, beyond Timișoara. We would see the mountaineers of Hatzeg. To what race can they belong? The men wear sheepskin pelisses and shoes of sheepskin. But it is their physiognomy which is peculiar, as much so as that of the Crow Indians who had the semi-lunar outlines to their faces. To begin with, their heads are so deeply lined and marked, riddled, in fact, and creased, and with men of middle age, more often completely bald and hairless. Like the head, therefore, of a tortoise, and with a tortoise's creased neck.

These are not the fox-masked Mongols with pointed chins and little tufts of beard, the men of Tamerlane, who, himself, was a Mongol of that type according to the portrait drawing of him by the Persian painter, Bihzad. They are, therefore, Mongols of an earlier invasion. Of Central-Asian ancestry; but not of the Golden Horde. Their big outstanding ears are those of the Buddha, but without the long lobes that were the mark of longevity and wisdom. Also, the eyes are not slanting. And the taint of their skins is not yellow. It is, rather, red

In the Puszta

or tawny. They are related, not to the Chinese, but to the Red Indian in the Mongol. Red Indian warriors, shaved for battle, but not warriors any more. Mere mountaineers and shepherds. Of prehistoric Mongol origin, for that blood is not to be mistaken among them. They are pastoral Siberians, settled near Danube's banks in a range of lonely mountains. We would seek out their priest or Shaman, for in customs as well as facially they are pre-Christian. They stand in their locks of wool outside their cut log cabins. No people of Europe are so primitive of aspect. The Buriats come immediately into mind. The home of their race must be behind the Altai. They reached this solitude after some frightful cataclysm, the survival of a scourge or epidemic, one of the flails or scorpions which fell upon the West. It will have been a flood of barbarians, coming out of the fires of sunrise and burning all before them. Sordid as an invasion out of the slums. This terror of the ancient world is preserved for us in the countenances of this little remnant. From how long ago, we cannot tell. But, once, they swarmed.

We have come to the huge plain of mirage. *Fata Morgana* plays along the endless air. Miles from anywhere, in midst of this, sits a shaggy bear. A man, crouching on his heels, and wrapped from the ground up to his eyes in a coat of sheepskin, so that no more than the top of his head is to be seen. Upon horseback he will be like a bear riding a wild horse, for he keeps his heels so much in play that the horse jumps at every moment.

Soon we come to a water well with a great pole above it like a gallows, and to more of the shaggy bears grouped round it in their unshorn sheepskins. Here, too, they wear the Hungarian cloak, or *szűr*, with the sleeves sewn up and used for pockets. It is a cloak of white woollen felt, embroidered at its hems and edges; the motif, often, being a garland of red roses, but with the flowers so disposed and eyed that they

The Hungarian Szűr and Suba

would be taken, superficially, for a design of peacock's feathers. There are ornaments, based on sprigs of rosemary, between the roses. Often these leaves are blue or yellow, or any colour but what is native to them.

Another cloak is the suba, worn by both men and women, of sheepskin, with the fleece inside or out according to the weather. They reach from the shoulders to the heels, and as many as fifteen whole sheepskins are required to make them. The dressed skins, with the fleece inside, hang in long straight folds or pleats, with much embroidery round the shoulders, down the pleats in floreations that expand into a formal flower; and many embroidered fringes round the hem. The effect is magnificent, for the suba sways and dangles. It has something Mongol or Turkish in its pastoral finery, an air belonging to a race of horsemen, for they are plains of cavalry. No one has ever walked. Their ancestry of the Orient is attested by the name of *szűcs* attached to the guilds of tanners and dressers of skins in Hungary since mediaeval times, in echo, as it were, of the legendary souks of the Eastern world. Until the end of the nineteenth century there were in the Alföld hundreds of makers of the *szűr* and *suba*, the design and pattern of which differed in every region. Now, it is doubtful if more than one or two masters of these ancient crafts could be found. But this vision of the shaggy bears fades like the mirage. Or it is another act: a changing of the scene.

It is no more the *puszta*. Here are villages, where the streets at certain festivals will be carpeted with flowers.¹ They will celebrate the winter solstice with mimes and processions, the actors being known as *regos* in Hungary, *turony* in Slovakia, and *turka* in Roumania, feasts in honour of the victory of the sun god; and games and pantomimes of

¹ Budaörs, a village near Budapest. But this custom exists in other places; in the Canary Islands; and at Barlow, in Derbyshire, where, also, the well head is garlanded with flowers.

Matyós

carnival, with shouting to drive away evil spirits, loud and discordant drumming, a relic of the ancient Shamanism; and in remote districts, ceremonies to do with the fertility of women, based upon magic, and which may include flagellation of the young brides and unmarried girls.

But we arrive among the *Matyós*, who inhabit a few villages in Northern Hungary and *Mezőkövesd*, famous for its costumes. The *Matyós* are different, ethnographically, from the Hungarians, and it is probable, of Tartar origin. The men wear small felt hats of black or green, perched at an angle, held in place by an elastic band; long white linen gowns like surplices, with laced sleeves; and a shirt which is thick with colours and presents roses and tulips. The married women have rich embroidery upon black; sometimes, a worked cap or helmet with short ostrich feathers, dyed red, surmounting it; but, more often, black feathers to match the blackness of their dresses, which, in some curious manner, suggests an equine ornament, as though the women, in symbol, were mares. They are, in fact, maned headdresses; and the image might be taken from the fringe of hair, between the ears, across the horse's skull. But the characteristic, so far, of the *Matyó* costume is the long white surpliced men's dress and their small round hats, so that they look like choristers or ecclesiastics, but obviously are also dancers, with something, almost, of the dervishes' long gowns that swing and fill with air as they swirl round and round in ecstasy.

The *ragyogó* is a headdress worn only by the bride upon her wedding day, a crown like that of the May Queen, composed of artificial flowers. The effect is extraordinary for its poetry. These Tartar villagers, the *Matyós*, have embodied in this, as in a ballad or a legend, the beauty of the harvest and the flowering fields. The outer edge of this crown or diadem is a convention of ears of corn which wave and tremble as the virgin walks. It is worn with a white pleated dress and

Costumes of Mezőkövesd

sleeves, or rather, shoulders that are as light and loose in filament as the crown above, so that the whole effect is that of white flowers. They are, themselves, bridal bouquets. And yet, in imagery, it is Mongol. It is to Mongol women that these virgins are related. The maidens of the Siberian tomb mounds are no different.

Their wedding ceremonies are much concerned, also, with pillows and fine linen. With feather beds stuffed with geese's down, and painted wooden furniture. But before Christmas, near the winter solstice, a crèche or presepio is set up in the houses, and before these the young girls kneel, wearing special clothes and a peculiar headdress that is yet more mysterious in origin. It is a high steeple hat, immensely thin and long, like a horn or a cornucopia, but with the esoteric meaning hidden behind its mediaeval aspect, for it is the hat of a court lady of the fifteenth century. The young girls wear wreaths of flowers across their foreheads, downwards, to behind their ears, and a frontal of flowers upon the hat, itself, and twining up its height. There are flowers, too, at the apex of the hat, and two folds of a veil or wimple descending from the crown, and from behind the head. These hats are tilted at a slanting angle. They are made of coloured paper, red and pink and white, and bear some affinity to the towers and buildings, likewise of coloured paper, made by the peasants of Zakopane and the Tatra mountains, work of the Slovaks and the Polish mountaineers, part, also, of the celebrations of Epiphany. Those are, in fact, set scenes for the presepio, but their fanciful architecture fulfils the only background that our imagination could project for these kneeling virgins.

It is the imagery of the sugar cone, the dunce's cap, existing in an ambience that is entirely of its own. Utterly capricious, for it has no relation to the buildings of their daily lives. This, too, which we apply to the wooden cabins of the Tatra, refers again to the Matyós for it is to be noticed that the

The Village Costumes

houses of Mezőkövesd are whitewashed, plain and dull, and that this fantastic enrichment of costume is, as it were, in supplement or recreation upon the ordinary visual circumstances of their lives. It is the art of shepherd or sheep-shearer, as much concerned with threads and stitches as that of the nomads in whose tents the rugs were woven. As though confined to a barge or to a circus tent the Matyós do no more than ornament a wooden board, a milk pail, a wooden chair, or table. The rest is what they wear upon their backs.

This country, of which we are speaking now, is the land of Brahms and Dvořák. It can only be considered, aesthetically, as the great peasant region, without respect to history, or to present frontiers. A world where humanity has flowered in music and legend, and in the arts of costume. What else could be said of a Magyar village, lost in the woods, where the women's hats are made from the skin of a great fungus or toadstool that springs up in the rains!

However characteristic of the Magyars it is continued over the border in Slovakia. Here upon a Sunday, or on a day of pilgrimage, you may see a whole village dressed in shades of pink and rose; children's dresses, in a village close to, that are like Tudor portraits; and a few miles further on old ladies in caps and ruffs resembling the mezzetins of Watteau. The country will be cultivated like a patchwork quilt, in long thin strips. Ethnographic frontiers in this region of the old Austria-Hungary were, perhaps, purposely obscured. Because of this confusion, when Brahms composed in Hungarian idiom, it could be called in stricter accuracy his country or idyllic style. For it was a poetic diction, almost, by which he was inspired, but only, loosely, of Magyar origin, for it is, as often, Slovak in character. How lovely are those moments! But we would listen to the peasant composer in this land of peasants.

This year, in the centenary of Dvořák, we would honour that neglected genius. Forgotten, although his music was

The Centenary of Dvořák

played in London sixty years ago. To those who love Dvořák he can become one of the pleasures of a sunlit world. Listen, if you may, to a golden age which was without war or persecution. Bohemia and its forests stretch out to the horizon. The sky is cloudless. It could be some summer pilgrimage in the countryside, and the music speaks a language which is more simple than the Slavonic patois. It is the universal peasant tongue. The harvest has started. Plums and apples have begun to fall. The beehives make the orchard loud. There is honey in the new hayrick and along the loaded bough. Inspiration came easily to Dvořák, who composed quickly and had not to meditate.

How beautiful are the Slavonic Dances, one and all of them! Music which, like *Casse Noisette*, can never tire. In our time of confusion how reassuring are his beauty and directness. Much of his chamber music, two works for pianoforte and strings, especially, and a string sextet, are written, throughout, in the Slavonic rhythm.¹ They may be among the most lovely of Dvořák's works, and have a quality of sunny spontaneity which is unique among the Slavs. In beauty of melody they are not inferior to Schubert. It would seem extraordinary that melodies of such loveliness should not be upon the lips of everyone. They are a part of the world's inheritance, but shared by few. In the case of tunes, such as these, doubts must exist in the mind as to whether the necessary combination of notes lay there, to be put together by mere science. It must be, as we said before, more in the nature of a lucky run upon numbers. It is a break, or graph, traced like lightning through them. The great composers of popular or cheap music work in the same laws, which are suddenly relaxed for them. And it is obvious that in the case of Schubert and in that of Dvořák, their surpassing gift for

¹ Quintet in A major, *op.* 81; quartet in E flat, *op.* 87; and string sextet in A major, *op.* 48.

Lands of the Peasant Ballerina

melody places them among that category. Nevertheless, Dvořák is likely to remain for ever neglected. His fame is static: and he is passing out of history as quickly as the peasant world of last century from these villages that we have seen. Of the peasant Dvořák more than a half lies in oblivion. But that which remains, long after his oratorios and other works of convention are forgotten, brings back a golden age.

The scene is a village street of thatched and whitewashed houses. It is immensely wide, and the one-storeyed houses stand sideways, with their gables showing. There has been some great religious festival. Everybody has come out of church, and is walking in the same direction towards the pilgrimage. It is a crowd, though, and not a procession. Rain has fallen, and the road is deep in mud. To one side, the wooden structure to draw water from the well could be a great gallows, or a huge whip resting in a wooden socket. No shops: nothing but an ugly row of lamp poles and some telegraph wires.

But it is the land of Coppelia. We must be near the borders of Galicia. The women and young girls are in ballet skirts. From behind, they look like ballerinas who have thrown a shawl across their shoulders and are hurrying through the draughty wings into their dressing rooms. It could be the corps de ballet after the last call in front of the curtain. And a number of young children with them will have had their places in the apotheosis, or the transformation. Even, for their gay colours, in the harlequinade.

For it is the land of the peasant ballerina. As many as seven or eight starched skirts are worn, one above another, and all of different colours. Their length is to just below the knee. Each skirt, too, is tightly pleated, so that the effect is that of a bell of clay or china. And the hems are all embroidered in many colours; while bright silk ribbons, woven with flowers, and made at one time in Lyon especially for these

Village Maidens of Kazár

villages, to the point that the name 'Lyon' is their synonym for silk, are fastened round their waists so that the long ends hang down, close together, over the backs of their ballet skirts, and down to the parti-coloured rims.

It would be as difficult to give the key to all these colours as to describe those pretty and expensive ribbons, for their quality lies in the subtle differences. But the top skirt can be bright scarlet, or gentian blue. If it be red, it will have a border of green, or white, or blue. If blue, the red geranium will edge the gentian. No two dresses are alike. Their fronts may be white frills or aprons, white bodices; or black, as the case may be. No headdresses; but the hair worn in long plaits or ringlets. Such is the costume of the Mátra mountains. In a particular village.

In another, the unmarried girls in their ballet skirts have white frilled sleeves, white aprons of heavy, open lace, like a bedspread or a counterpane worked with patterns; a silken shawl across the chest; and crowns of embroidery and gold and silver paste, with the flowered silk ribbons hanging from them. Sitting there, a few of them together, upon a Sunday afternoon, they could be Berber women. It is due to the conventional designs in black and red upon their aprons; and although, sitting down, their ballet skirts are not in evidence, they have the air of dancers. In this village the colours are worn alike. The difference is in the detail. That makes them, again, into a troupe of dancers. In fact, they are village maidens of Kazár, in Northern Hungary, near the Slovakian border.

But it is more fanciful, near by, at Buják. This is the region of ballet skirts and Russian boots. Here, the effect dwarves the wearer. They are authentic ballerinas in their small stature. The stranger could feel himself upon the stage among them. The bodice, itself, is a complex masterpiece, as elaborate as in a portrait by Cornelius Janssen, or by Mark Gheeraerds. It has arched and frilled shoulders, the form of

The Ballet Skirts of Buják

which is continued down to the waist, then gathered in a bow and the ends spread out upon the bustle, so stiff and starched that they keep in position. From the back, therefore, it is a ruff in the form of a figure eight. The collar is high and stiff, and hung with necklaces.

The ballet skirt can be rose pink, closely ribbed, and with concentric rings of white. Near the rim there is a row of green; rose pink again; then white: then black, with blue divisions and flowers in red and green; and then a rose pink edging. Two long flowered ribbons from the waist trail down upon this. And the ballerina has a coloured ribbon tied at each shoulder, and looped round at the elbow.

For other skirts can be of a red stuff flowered with green; or of a woven material that has horizontal stripes of grey and yellow upon white. Others are blue or red, accordion pleated, but of soft and pastel ground, with a wide band of white, worked flowers, and no other ornament, rather more than half-way down the skirt. These will have bodices richly embroidered with flowers, roses and tulips predominating, as though to balance with the lack of ornament below. This type, though, is more common in the Kalocsa country of Southern Hungary; where it is worn with clocked stockings and red boots. Nevertheless, it is a costume of the ballerina sort. But the true country of the peasant ballerina lies, where we see it, in the Mátra mountains, and typically at Kazár or Buják. This is the little town near to the borders of Galicia.

II

Swanilda has stooped down to pick up the key. Her companions on the stage are the peasant ballerinas; but Swanilda wears the one ballet skirt alone. How young and gay the music! And she unlocks the door.

When we come upstairs into the mysterious room Swanilda

Fandango and Ecossaise

has, already, put on the doll Coppelia's costume. Frantz, her lover, climbs a ladder and steps in at the window. Doctor Coppelius returns. And Swanilda, as Coppelia, has become capricious.

She takes up a sword and strikes the other dolls with it; the mandarin, who nods his head and hands, and the Moor who plays the dulcimer. She kicks the pages of the book of magic with her toe. Coppelius gets alarmed, but succeeds in stopping her. He is bewildered at her sudden moods and tries to calm her. He puts a tambourine into her hand. And what do we see and hear? Upon the instant there is Spanish music. Coppelia dances a fandango or a seguidilla. Aha! the patios and balconies. The dry cackle of the castanets, in rhythm, coming from the shuttered windows of the dance school of Otero. White fan and snow white mantilla. All through the heat. Siguiriyas, polos, martinetes, in the Gypsy suburb of Triana. But it has ended as suddenly as it began.

Swanilda is Coppelia again.

The applause dies down. And, with the last handclap, we see another change of mood.

She picks a plaid up off the floor, and dances a jig or écossaise. It has a twining and returning rhythm. We taste, in it, the sugar on the shortbread, and have time to see the green eyes of the dancer and her freckled face. How charming if she could wear tartan stockings and a Highland bonnet! A dance of a fishergirl among the laced pinks of Paisley! There are sweetshop windows, rose and lemon yellow, and Sunday will be the Scot Sabbath.

But it ends.

Swanilda, as Coppelia, runs behind the curtain. And we hear that curious tinkling tune again. It is the air to which the doll, Coppelia, makes her movements. Coppelius pulls back the curtain. But she is sitting stiffly there, as usual.

At this moment Swanilda glides away. Coppelius runs to

Miming of the Golden Cornstalks

the window and sees her arm in arm with Frantz, crossing the square below. The old man faints in midst of his clockwork figures. And the curtain falls.

The scene is a shady lawn before the castle. The festival has begun. A huge bell stands in the background, hanging from poles which are decked with flags. Beside it is drawn up an allegorical car filled with players. The young couples about to be married are being presented to the lord of the manor. When this is done the nobleman mounts a platform, and makes a sign for the dancing to begin.

Swanilda and Frantz are left alone.

She takes up a little bunch of cornstalks and holds it to her ear. It is a lovely moment. She listens to the corn sheaf. And we are to imagine a summer wind playing in its golden locks. As though the lovers walked by the edge of a cornfield.

‘Does it not say that you love me no more?’ she asks.

Frantz answers that he heard nothing.

Then Swanilda gives the corn to one of Frantz’s friends. He listens to it, and says he hears quite well. This lovely pastoral is perfectly expressed in mime. It is, even, more beautiful from the stylized movements. How pretty Swanilda would be, if you were alone with her, in a corner of the golden harvest! In her short ballet skirt, walking birdlike, in the convention of the ballerina, with her satin shoes.

If she can appear, thus, before five thousand persons; why not, if you are her lover, for yourself alone? Like a painted idol. More exciting in the thought of that; and then, again, only as herself. Not, really, Swanilda: still less, Coppelia. Only the girl who mimed that rôle; but who walks with you down the summer evening. For whom you could break off a sheaf of corn, and with your own hand hold it to her ear, lifting her hair to do so. The same person, or the shades of her, through all time. In a long gown of saffron by the leaning stone;

Csárdás

and, now, to the Hungarian dulcimer in a field of rye. It is beautiful to watch Swanilda among the peasant ballerinas.

But the little tinkling air plays once more. In its happy associations, it could be an entr'acte bell heard after long illness when we go to the theatre; or when the theatres open again and there is peace. To this tune Doctor Coppelius forces his way through the crowd and demands to be compensated for the damage done to his toys. We could see the ghosts of the lovely Olympia and Spalanzani: of Antonia and Doctor Mirakel: of Giulietta and Peter Schlemihl. A purse is put into the old man's hand, and he goes off. Oh! when shall we see him and his automaton again!

The stage clears for the csárdás.

The dancers take up their places. The men, in their long gowns, like surplices, place their hands on the girls' waists; and the girls take the men by both shoulders. This is how they dance the csárdás. The tune is first played out to its length, and given every accent. Two by two, stamping their Russian boots, the dancers come up to the footlights. But Swanilda, and a few of the peasant ballerinas, come from the country of the satin shoe. Once more, the csárdás, in all the fullness of the tune.

And then the music quickens. The dancers spin round like tops. It is the reason for those ballet skirts. The leaping tearing csárdás comes. Faster and faster. Fragments of the tune whirl and turn upon themselves. It is an intoxication. The golden cornstalks have been garnered in: the grapes have been gathered. They give themselves upon the music. And it turns and turns. New themes come in and dance with each other. The dance of the village inn, while sunset dies along the plain. It is a fury of excitement. The cymbalon is leading. And it rises into a frenzy or delirium, until the dancers are breathless and fall upon the ground. Or outlast the music, and spin into the wings. And the stage lies in darkness. The golden sun, the golden cornstalks dead. And the csárdás ended.

Book VII

Festival at Nola



Festival at Nola

I. Night at Santa Lucia.

'Rends-moi le Pausilippe et la mer d'Italie.'—GÉRARD DE NERVAL

U pon such a night as this it is impossible to sleep. All Naples sings: or strums the mandoline.¹ It is because the god of music has persisted here, but lingers only in the trembling of the lute string. The mask of Pulcinella is scribbled on the walls. A man runs past in rags; and the mules and horses are thin as ghosts from the knacker's yard.

Here are booths of amulets and sacred emblems. There is a smell of wax. These are the candle shops. Little plaster statuettes show saints or sinners writhing in the fire. We are among the statues. You will see wings being fitted to a wooden doll.

¹ The Festival of St. Paulinus, at Nola, is described in *Siciliana: sketches of Naples and Sicily in the Nineteenth Century*, by Ferdinand Gregorovius, translated from the German by Mrs. Gustavus W. Hamilton, London, G. Bell & Sons, 1914, pp. 111-123. It is taken from *Wanderjahre in Italien*, published, in German, in 1853. My account of the festival is based upon this. The translation by Mrs. Gustavus W. Hamilton is, in itself, a work of art. A few of her sentences and phrases I have quoted in entirety, because it is impossible to improve upon them. My account of the festival, indeed, is a picture based, as it were, upon a sketch by Gregorovius. This is the place, perhaps, in which to remind readers, not only of the *History of the City of Rome* by Gregorovius; but, also, of his *Roman Journals, 1852-1874*, translated by Mrs. Gustavus W. Hamilton, G. Bell & Sons.

Sights and Sounds of Naples

Gods and goddesses are for sale in the workshops. And, at the corners, there are barrows for old clothes.

Here are water melons, 'Redder than the fire of Vesuvius,' as the peddlars cry them : apricots, 'There's cinnamon inside' : pears are 'Ladies' thighs. We adore them!' : grapes are, 'Gold, not grapes' : nuts, 'As fine as quails' legs.' Here are booths of lemonade with festoons of lemons. Here are the stalls of pizze, flat pancakes cooked with cheese and tomatoes ; and bladders of goat's cheese, or mozzarella. Men, old and young, and a few women, drink sanguinaccio, made from chocolate and pig's blood, which improves the constitution. Here are stalls of syrups : and flower stalls of roses and carnations. You cannot see the sky for strings of washing.

It is a phantasmagoria : an hallucination. What we see are living phantoms. For this is ninety or a hundred years ago. Here are the Pulcinella theatres, with Pulcinella's house at the entrance, whence the snapping tones of the mannikin are heard above the siren waves. For stone steps descend down to the water's edge, and it is an open paved foreshore, as it could be the stage of a huge theatre set for a crowd scene. A sea piazza for a marine festival. The lazzaroni sleep, everywhere, upon the pavement and the sea wall, in their rags and stocking caps, the cap of a tarantella dancer. The mask of Pulcinella upon the wall becomes the symbol of the town.

It is Santa Lucia, the fishermen's quarter down by the waters of the Bay. Here are the oyster stalls. But, as well, all kinds of shellfish are offered in this horn of plenty. It is like a fair or market. Here, too, the nymphs of night cast their nets for strangers. This is the city of Parthenope, a siren or sea nymph whose naked body was found upon the shore. These are her daughters.

This is Santa Lucia of old Naples, long pulled down.

To-morrow, we rise early. But who could sleep to-night? We can see the volcano and the rock of Capri. It all lies before

Capri, Procida and Ischia

us. In their season there are cliffs of violet and narcissus where Procida and Ischia float upon the milky seas. With vales of lemon and pomegranate trees. The goatherd stays upon the mountain, looking down :

'To isles of fragrance, lily-silver'd vales
Diffusing languor to the panting gales :
To lands of singing and of dancing slaves,
Love-whisp'ring woods and lute-resounding waves.'

It is late : but there is no end to the music and the singing. In this town of the volcano and the tarantella. The town of Southern superstition. The urn into which Campania pours her grapes ; while the Bay loads the cornucopia with shells and fishes.

We hear, all night, the twang of the guitar. Through the open shutters, from the balcony. While the bells of many convents, some cracked, some strident, strike the restless hours. Here is the tunnel, hewn by convicts. And the tomb of Virgil. The oleander, even in the darkness, blooms before the palace of pink walls. In wooden tubs at foot of the great stair. But we would have no palaces. We would, sooner, the oyster stalls and fishing nets. And the mask and cap of Pulcinella.

The early morning is virginal, but sordid. On the way to the railway station, through the mean streets, we meet the galley slaves, guarded by soldiers, and marching two by two, clanking their heavy chains. Some are wearing blood-red, the colour of fraud and infamy. Turning a corner, we see Vesuvius and the Bay. It is June 26th : the morning of the festival at Nola.

II. Festival of St. Paulinus.

For an hour, or a little more, the train goes through the Campanian plain. On every side are vines as high as

Pulcinella working in the Vines

houses. Nola is twenty miles from Naples,¹ and not far from Aversa, the birthplace of Pulcinella; whose image, or prototype, works in the vineyards in soiled white linen coat and cap and trousers. In the dog days of August he may be nearly naked in this classic land. For it was at Nola that Augustus Caesar died: and the peasant still drinks red wine from a two-handled amphora of terracotta. But Nola has its own Campania, where the vines are trained on stunted elms and apple trees, and there are terraces of lemon and pomegranate trees. They are apples, indeed, of a special and late sort, that taste of lime and honey. Never hidden for long, we see the cone and plume of smoke from Vesuvius.

But the excitement grows. It is not enough that the flat-topped houses of one storey are the home of Pulcinella. For we are approaching the most extraordinary of all festivals in a Mediterranean land. And the roads have become long clouds of golden dust. Through these dash the calessos and carricolas, two-wheeled open carriages going at full gallop, crowded with anybody who can cling to them. Cross-gartered peasants in the peaked hat of Fra Diavolo; monks and priests; children beyond counting; and peasant women wearing the striped dresses with puffed sleeves of the district, and

¹ Nola was an important town in classical antiquity. Hannibal was defeated, here, by Marcellus; while Augustus Caesar died at Nola in A.D. 14. At the present time it is a town of some ten thousand inhabitants. St. Paulinus was born in Gascony in A.D. 351, his father being a Roman Prefect of Gaul. He was converted to Christianity at Bordeaux, and having been made Consul was appointed to Campania. He became Bishop of Nola, and was famous as a poet and religious author. He died A.D. 431, and is buried in the Church of S. Bartolommeo in Rome. While he was Bishop of Nola, the only son of a widow in that town was taken by the Vandals into slavery in Libya. St. Paulinus set out to rescue him, and became a slave himself. It was upon his return to Nola from servitude that he was met by the inhabitants of Nola, dancing and carrying obelisks in front of them. The festival was celebrated, ever after, on June 26th. St. Paulinus was made the subject of a Latin epic by Saverino de Rinaldis, in imitation of Virgil, called the *Paolineide*. This poem may contain further clues to the festival.

Pictures upon the Walls

the mucador or headdress of the country, a veil folded in classical manner upon the back of the head. As to the galloping horses, they have loud and jingling harness, their manes are twisted with flowers, and pheasants' tail feathers nod above their necks. Crowds are pouring in from Naples and from all Campania to the festival.

We have arrived at Nola. But no one can walk at his ordinary pace towards the town. All are hurrying, or running. The railway station is a little distance from the walls. And here the fair and the great festival begin. More than ever it is a phantasmagoria, an hallucination. One must go carefully and forget nothing of what is to be seen.

The walls of the town have been covered with gigantic pictures, painted in a frenzy, where the masters of old Italy have come down to the gutter, working all night and for a day before. Decorations for a slum inferno; painted wings of houses; Cupids of the mean lodgings; a garlic-eating Harlequin; the family of Pulcinella; the volcano and the golden Bay; and the 'gran Foca marina', the monster, or sea-calf, shown to the public in an ancient tower. Musicians and town criers make incessant fanfares and trumpet blasts, as though for a circus entrance, and the effect of this perpetual repetition of an opening phrase or flourish is both exciting and pitiful. These fanfares, which will linger for long afterwards in the memory, sounding suddenly, for no reason, in the silence of the night, are so many frantic appeals to be heard above the others, and not to be allowed to starve. They are military ghosts: trumpeters dying on the field of battle, who with their last breath lift the trumpet to their lips. Yet pariahs, street Arabs of the Neapolitan slums. Tritons, too, who play their conch horns before the shell of Amphitrite, the sea-goddess, who, in metamorphosis of the fair is none other than the 'Gran Foca marina', the sea-calf who is an exhibition in the tower. With a hired band of music to proclaim her, she

Strolling Actors

journeys from town to town, and came to Nola, last night, drawn in a tank of water on a waggon. Mute goddess, who lifts her seal-like neck and looks pitifully around her in her prison tower. The trumpet blasts that surround and accompany her can mean nothing to her animal mind but cries for food and cries for love. Her mammal soul, and the souls of ten or twenty men, are in a drove, a finny herd, together.

Every kind of stall has been set up at the entrance to the town. Their purpose is to catch the crowds before they get into the streets. The hucksters are calling out with all the force of Southern lungs. It is not exactly a market, for the crowd pours through it in one direction towards the town. Most of them are carrying little coloured flags, and have bought emblems or amulets of St. Paulinus, as well as food and flasks of wine. But, as well, every conceivable object is for sale. Green umbrellas, pigs and sheep, strings of sausages, mortadella, cheap crockery.

But a strange and wonderful sight makes one breathless and gives the sacred tingling to the skin. It is announced by the trumpet and the drum. Something moves: it is a curtain drawn aside. The actors come out on to a trestle, and the curtain falls back behind them. We behold another race, of *Areôis*, of strolling players, who spend their lives in travelling from town to town, exhibiting their performances, and spreading the contagion of the stage. Some instinct tells one they are of different race. They are standing on two planks set up on trestles before their booth or theatre. There is no time to stay. The crowd press us on. But it is something that will for ever haunt the memory. Four or five actors and two women, or soubrettes. Of a race apart, as it could be priests or temple prostitutes. Where are they now? Still travelling with some fair? For the circus music does not change so much. But it is wonderful to see them in the sunlight of an early morning amid the fanfares and the frenzied voices. A mandoline hangs

Strolling Actors

by a ribbon from a nail. Columbine, the dove, the gentle singer, lifts it down and holds it in her hands. It is impossible to hear her; but she begins to sing. The other dances, and holds a tambourine. There is a clown, a comic Bacchus, camp follower of his Indian triumph; a young man who is poet or pierrot of the company; and a person cast for tragedy. Their voices are quite lost in all the din, so that it could be one of those common nightmares in which you call for help and cannot make a sound. No one listens: or looks at them for longer than a moment. Everyone is hurrying, or running past.

We are carried on, as though to an assault upon the town. Looking back, we see them work their blandishments; but all in vain. No one has the strength, or patience. All press forward into the town; entering through a breach in the walls or fortifications, a place where those have just crumbled and the fallen stones lie, one upon another. Not a gate or solemn entrance into Nola. But there are many lanes and alleys leading from it, into which the crowd disperse to find the quickest way to the piazza. For the Piazza del Duomo is the centre of the festival. But these alleys are dark. The sun has not yet come down to them. And in their silence, where there is no other sound than that of hurrying footsteps, we hear behind, in front of us, and to every side, the noise and music of the fair.

But, of a sudden, noisy and discordant music bursts upon the ear. Of a curious, halting, swaying rhythm. As though it is moving slowly forward. Tottering from side to side. Can this be imagination? In the distance there are shouts and fanfares. Furious blasts of the trumpet; and the fevered sensation that every window in the tall houses may open like a showman's box, a Punch and Judy theatre. With gaunt and bright movements of which we will not know the hidden drama. But it grows louder and steadier. It is coming in our way. We are to see the pagan mystery.

A Tower or Obelisk that Walks

Here it is. Down this side street, and moving towards us.

A tower, or monster, tottering in its steps, in midst of an immense crowd. Taller than the houses to either side; and rushing one in ecstasy or delirium from Campania to India. For it is entirely Indian in this moment. Yet, not. It is a tower, or obelisk, of five storeys. We recognize Corinthian columns in every storey, and a frieze and niches. But the whole obelisk glitters, or coruscates, red and gold and silver. The columns are bright ruby red with tinsel; and, in their shadows, red like Bengal fires. The tower is gold paper and gilt paint, figured with saints and angels on a golden background. Paladins, also, in gold or silver armour, troops of cherubs, painted genii, false draperies and curtains, golden arabesques and flowers; while this painted population hold in their hands gilded palm leaves, wreathes of flowers, and the spilling cornucopia. Many of the saints are dressed like Roman warriors; or wear the golden buskins of an actor. In the lowest storey of the obelisk there sit a choir of young girls, virgins, dressed in white, and garlanded with flowers. Above them, on a level with the first floor windows of the houses, there is a band of trumpets and kettledrums, with triangles and cornets. The obelisk is borne upon the shoulders of about thirty porters; and has just begun to move. It had been waiting, and is now ready. It advances. Tottering; and swaying like a palanquin.

It has passed us, and moves slowly on, standing higher than the roofs of the houses, with an extraordinary sound of creaking and fluttering, a straining of ropes, and a shaking and jostling of its many statues. Down one street, and then another, this huge obelisk proceeds, directed, it would seem, by instinct or the group soul of the bearers. At its apex, a saint with a golden nimbus glitters in the sun, above the tiled and lichened roofs. We follow, walking in the crowd. And now there is a burst of music from a different side, and the sum-

Description of the Obelisks

mits of another and then another obelisk appear above the housetops. All these moving towers are proceeding in the same direction towards the cathedral.

What are these gigantic obelisks?

They are the *guglie di San Paolino*. The *guglia* is a form of religious monument that is peculiar to Naples, and found nowhere else. A marble obelisk in several storeys, or we could call them members, topped by a statue of the Madonna or a saint. Their shape is that of the flame of a candle, the jet of a fountain, and up all their height they have masks and bas-reliefs, and balustrades and statues. There are three of them at Naples.¹ The *guglia del Gesù*, outside the church of Il Gesù Nuovo, with its façade of stones cut into diamond points, is the most elaborate of all, and springs sixty or seventy feet into the air, surmounted by a statue of the Virgin, an exuberant and bubbling monument of marble, diamond-shaped, itself, in plan, and set at an angle to the Gesù. Nothing in architecture is more expressive of the vitality of the Neapolitans than these baroque obelisks. Here, at Nola, the marble of the *guglia* (which means lily) has been metamorphosed into an obelisk that moves, and is inhabited by living persons. It is a tower with motion. A triumphal car, a juggernaut made from a pyramid, a living fountain.

As to the origin of the *guglie di San Paolino* it is probable that some form of triumphal car had been used in the festival since early times. They were, as we shall know presently, made anew every year by the different Guilds of Nola, and we may assume that they followed in their decoration the fashion of the day. They will have been late Gothic, accord-

¹ The other two *guglie* in Naples are that of San Domenico, in front of the church of that name; and of San Gennaro, which is in a piazza at back of the cathedral. Their date is, approximately, 1690-1730. There is a connection between these Neapolitan *guglie* and such monuments of the Austrian Baroque as the Trinity column in the Graben at Vienna, designed by the Italian theatre painter, Burnacini.

Guglie di San Paolino

ing to the Neapolitan Gothic of their time; and have gone through the various phases of the Renaissance to Baroque. But, when the guglie were set up in the squares of Naples, the inspiration communicated itself immediately to the inhabitants of this provincial town, and the pattern became fixed. They designed a guglia that could be carried through the streets; that could tower up above the houses; that carried living persons, singers and musicians; and that gave such opportunities to the carver and the gilder. At the time when we see the moving towers of Nola, in the last days of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the type had been followed in its deviations for a hundred years and more. Being so essentially Neapolitan, the spirit of it faded with the passing of their independence. A few years later it had lost its force. We see it, therefore, in its prime, when Campania down to the city and the Bay was a land of singing and of dancing slaves.

The guglie of Nola are constructed in this manner. A high wooden scaffolding with canvas sides is set up in the street close to the house of the head of each Guild. This screen of canvas keeps the work secret, and protects each obelisk and its artificers against the weather. And so the guglia begins to grow; hidden on three sides, and with boughs of myrtle and green branches on the fourth, where the obelisks nearly touch upon the houses. The work continues for six months. By early June the guglia has begun to rise above the roofs. It is growing like the Indian mango tree.

Each Guild, or Arte, makes its guglia. And every one of them is to be known by the principal statue on its front. Judith, glittering with gold, holds a dripping head of Holofernes upon the obelisk of the Husbandmen or Reapers. But this group of sculpture only fills the niche upon the middle storey. Upon the highest floor of every guglia there stands an angel swinging a censer; above this a golden cupola or a gilded flower; and, on top of all, the statue of a saint. On the

The Nine Towers of Nola and their Emblems

guglia of the Husbandmen or Reapers it is St. George with the cross of Malta and a white flag in his hand. But besides this, as a distinguishing sign, each obelisk has an emblem hanging from the frieze of its main storey. The Husbandmen and Reapers have a sickle; the Bakers two huge loaves; the Butchers a joint of meat; the Gardeners a pumpkin; the Tailors a white waistcoat; the Cobblers a shoe; the Grocers a cheese; the Wine Merchants a fiasco. And, as well, each obelisk has a man to walk in front of it, carrying a particular emblem. A silver pillar is borne in this manner before the obelisk of the Wine Merchants; and on this pillar lies a wine barrel, held by two little statues of St. Peter and St. Paul. The Guild of Gardeners is more fanciful. It is preceded by a handsome youth who holds a cornucopia, and smiles upon the crowd.

Standing in the Piazza del Duomo we see, and hear, the coming of the guglie. From every quarter of the town the obelisks are on the march. Each has a choir in its lowest storey; and above that, the cornets and kettledrums, the triangles and trumpets. There are nine obelisks in all. They advance, tottering in their steps, and halt every now and then to give a rest to their bearers. No sight could be more thrilling than the convergence of so many marching towers. Several streets lead into the Piazza; and one or more obelisks, to their own music, advance down every street. The giant of giants belongs to the Guild of Farmers. It is one hundred and two palms in height; or between sixty and seventy feet from the shoulders of the bearers up to the golden nimbus of the saint. As it comes forth into the square we see the living actors in the lower storeys, and young girls or boys above them in short tunics and helmets of gilded paper, holding in their hands gilded wands or golden bulrushes. Above and around them are the hundreds of golden statues, big or small.

This greatest of the obelisks is preceded by two little paste-

Procession into the Piazza

board towers, in which sit children crowned with golden wreaths. Behind them, a pasteboard caique, or pleasure boat, on which a boy sits, cross-legged, in a Turkish costume, holding a pomegranate flower. After this comes a galleon, floating in a little painted ocean. At the prow there is a young man in Moorish dress; and on the poop a statue of St. Paulinus kneeling at an altar. At the back the towering guglia of the Guild of Farmers comes forth with bursts of music, and as it appears in all its height there is the detonation of ten thousand crackers, thrown down not only on the Piazza, but in all the streets that lead to it. The church bells ring their loudest, and flocks of pigeons fly round, volleying their wings, and casting swift shadows out of the cloudless sky. Every balcony is full of people, and hung with flowers. Below, nearly all the crowd are carrying little banners of gold and silver paper; while we begin to hear, at once, the music of as many obelisks, marching, one behind another, into the square.

The giants of pantomime are now visible in all their strangeness. Like so many, marching, golden fountains. The gilded saints at their summits, balanced by the golden jet, are theatrical and extraordinary in their attitudes, praying, preaching, or bestowing blessings. Some gaze from their pedestals, in ecstasy, into the sky; or look down from their giddy height upon the crowd. One is a kneeling saint, borne on his totem pole down every street towards the altar of the Duomo. Another stands like an Indian fakir on his mango tree. One rolls in triumph upon his gilded car. Another strides the golden lotus petal. For, in symbol, they are Indian; and the procession of these towers is like some Hindu festival. Not in its decadence, but it could be a thousand or two thousand years ago. They could belong to that sect of Brahmins in whose name it is denoted that 'their covering is the air'; or to those others who are 'clad in white', or 'saffron yellow'. And we would think of these towers, accordingly, as waggon-

The Golden Nimbus

temples built to receive the god for his yearly visit of one day only in the golden month of June. In reason of this the guglie di San Paolino are so many pagodas by their multitude of idols. Of that legendary India where Krishna, a lovely youth of Ganges in a yellow robe, played his flute and all living beings were entranced.

The procession of these Stylites on their pillars is purely pagan as a spectacle. It is thrilling and intoxicating like a draught of pagan wine. We are carried back to the arcana of the ancient gods. We are to see other mysteries. But the discordant music of so many bands grows loud and louder. Nine towers are advancing; and there is time to see the different nimbus to each statue of the saint. For none are alike. A wild fantasy has set the constellations on their heads. There is the simple nimbus, a circle like the bands of Saturn, or Orion's golden belt. A half-moon nimbus in emblem of the months above the pagoda of the Gardeners, for the weather alters with the new moon. A fuller moon, that is like a sickle, above the Reapers' golden tower. A golden barley moon above the Bakers' wain. A circle of golden stars upon the great obelisk of the Guild of Farmers, which, in their golden multitude suggest the sheaves of corn. But, also, there are other fantasies of the golden nimbus. One pagoda—could it be the obelisk of the Tailors?—has the statue of St. Paulinus in a shepherd's or a pilgrim's dress, with staff in his hand and wine flask at his side, wearing a rakish tricorne or a corded hat, and the nimbus behind his head is the stylized counterpart of that. The obelisk of the Wine Merchants has its statue backed with a sunburst of golden rays, as it could be the smiling face of Bacchus looking down upon the vines. And it is not only golden. It has strips of mirror set in it, which glitter like diamonds. At each halt of the obelisk, as the bearers set it down, the nimbus sparkles or trembles in its fire. It burns with a steady light; and, again, flashes as the

Dance of the Obelisks

march proceeds. It has advanced into the square. This golden rocket hangs, in perpetuity, upon the air. And, round it, the lesser fountains leap, continually, to their appointed height.

All nine towers, tottering and swaying, are to be seen at once. And so many mysteries are contained in them. Each obelisk is in the pattern of the *guglia*, that Neapolitan invention which was derived from the great machinery of the old Italian theatre, with its 'clouds' and the 'heaven' or 'Parnassus' of its transformations. The *guglia* belongs, in fact, to the school of Bibiena, and is related to the huge funeral catafalques, or to the staged mysteries of the Passion erected in their churches by the Jesuits. But here, at Nola, the *guglia* is not static. It has been given movement. It is a living monument that moves and . . .

For we will know in another moment! It is Indian in its exuberance. This pagoda has its idols of the living and the dead. We are in the nodding plain of India, among its temples. Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra roll their waters. It is a sacred spell, or an intoxication. But, as well, the nine towers, the nine obelisks of Nola, are nine holy mountains. A sacred Thebaid of a night and day. These are its crags and pinnacles. The cliffs of Meteora, the Cappadocian mountains hollowed out with grottos. There are hermits upon the summits of the hills. Not the nymphs of old, who cried out aloud upon the rocks; but holy anchorites, the athletes of religion, advancing on their pillars. For the nine towers are tottering forward. They are coming out, all nine of them, into the square.

And the tallest tower of all sets out dancing to the music of its band. A man with a conductor's baton stands in front of it, and gives the time. In the beginning it is as though it is about to fall. It totters, while its population of the living and the dead rattle in their bones. Then it steadies. The obelisk lifts its feet and dances. It treads the measure. The thirty

Dance and Counter Dance

bearers move in rhythm, stepping this way and that. The colossus dances: or it could be a huge elephant and its howdah. Dancing in this manner, each obelisk takes up its place before the Duomo.

Now comes the counter dance. With two men to beat the time, one obelisk dances against another, in a solo dance and counter dance of swaying towers. One moment they are leaning towers or campaniles, at a slant, in different angles, in outward perspective, sloping from old age, or in a subsidence of the soil beneath the ancient city; but then they come together into time, and bow in rhythm. They shake and tremble, as though seized with the ecstasy, while they dance side by side. Then move apart again and dance, one against another, in cross rhythm to the music of their choirs and bands. And now they dance in pairs, the whole nine of them changing partners, a dance of giants who are clumsy in their movements. We can hear the music of four obelisks at once, while the other five towers hide behind them, and we only know the stamping feet, and that the piazza is full of dancing pyramids. The dance and counter dance of each pair of obelisks lasts for a few moments, for as long as the bearers can support the weight, after which each tower comes to a standstill and the trumpets play a wild flourish to announce the end, and the start of a new mystery.

About twenty men and youths begin to dance round each obelisk in turn. Each puts his hands upon the shoulders of his neighbour, making a ring or circle in midst of which two solo dancers move in counter rhythm, with a third youth whom they lift up in their arms. While they dance with him, he is in a lying or recumbent posture, but goes through the motions of dancing with his limbs. He grows more languid and more lifeless. He droops: he shuts his eyelids: he is dead: or sleeping. The music quickens: and the circle dance round him, faster and faster, to a quickening measure. And now comes

Adonis with the Castanets

the mystery of the festival. For the dead or sleeping youth returns to life. He smiles and lifts his head. He raises himself upon his shoulders. He has awoken. He stretches his arms. And, with a sudden movement, he strikes his castanets in the air.

This dance is performed in front of every obelisk. No one can explain it. The meaning has been lost far back in antiquity. It has been suggested that the rites of Adonis are portrayed in it. In the Adonia, the festival in honour of Adonis, celebrations were held for two days, the first of which was spent in howling and lamentations, the second in joyful clamour, as if Adonis was returned to life. This youth, we would recall, was the favourite of Venus. He was killed by a wild boar, while hunting, and Venus after many tears changed him into a flower called anemone. He was restored to life by Proserpine, on the condition that he should divide the year between herself and Venus, living six months with each. This is symbolical of the alternate return of summer and winter.

But the rites of Adonis are identical with those of the Egyptian Osiris, which, also, began in lamentation and ended in rejoicing, when Osiris returned among the living. Osiris was a legendary King of Egypt, who brought the fruits of civilization to the earth. He was murdered; and Isis, his wife, wandered through the world seeking for her husband. He was magically restored to life by his son Horus, and continued to rule the land as King of the dead. It has been written that nothing could give a clearer idea of the power and greatness of Osiris than this inscription, in hieroglyphs, which has been found upon some ancient monuments: 'Saturn, the youngest of all the gods, was my father. I am Osiris, who conducted a large and numerous army as far as the deserts of India, and travelled over the greatest part of the world, and visited the streams of the Ister, and the remote shores of the ocean, diffusing benevolence to all the inhabitants of the earth.'

Rites of Osiris

Osiris, we may add, is more generally given as the son of Jupiter and Niobe. It is stated that after his golden reign in Egypt, Osiris resolved to go and spread civilization in the other parts of the earth. He left his Kingdom in the care of his wife Isis, and of her minister Hermes or Mercury. The command of his troops at home was left to the trust of Hercules, a warlike officer. Osiris was accompanied upon his expedition by his brother Apollo, and by Anubis, Macedo, and Pan. He marched through Ethiopia, where his army was increased by the addition of the Satyrs, who made dancing and playing on musical instruments their chief study. Afterwards he passed through Arabia; and so to India, or its borders. As to Saturn, his, also, was the golden age. During the festival of the Saturnalia, held in Rome, which is not far distant from Nola, the chains were taken from the statues, to intimate the freedom and independence enjoyed by mankind during the golden age. It was permitted, too, for slaves to ridicule their masters. The festival, itself, had been instituted by Janus, the most ancient King who ruled in Italy, in gratitude to Saturn from whom he had learnt agriculture.

Whether the march of Osiris into India clashed with that of Bacchus, we are not told, and can but conjecture. It is more probable, indeed, that Bacchus was identical with the Osiris of the Egyptians. The festival of Nola would seem to be in classical descent from the Bacchanalia or Dionysia of the ancients. Or, equally, from the Saturnalia or Adonia. It had become involved, somehow, in the return of St. Paulinus from his slavery in Africa. Or was made the occasion or the excuse for that. When he came back to Nola, so the legend runs, he was met by the citizens, dancing and carrying these obelisks or towers before them. It would appear, then, that an old feast of fertility, of a golden age, held in a Roman provincial town, took on a Christian meaning and survived till modern times. The youth who returns to life is none other

An Indian Triumph

than Adonis, in the guise of that only son of the widow of Nola, who was carried by the Vandals into slavery in Libya. St. Paulinus set forth to become a slave in his stead and rescue him. Hence the dancing obelisks: in time, influenced in their shape by the *guglie* of near-by Naples. The Indian or Hindu aspects of the festival are brought about by the circumstance that the feast itself, in origin, was something of an Indian triumph, considering the legends of Bacchus or Osiris; and by the fact that the prolixity of both ornament and imagination in Southern Italy, during the Baroque age of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, produced effects in sculpture and in architecture that are almost Indian, as many authorities have noticed when discussing the Neapolitan churches, or the churches and palaces of such towns as Lecce, in Apulia. Here, in Nola, it is not a church, nor a palace. It is the whole procession that is Indian.

The nine towers glitter in the blue Campanian sky. Preceded by many monks of all the Orders, and by bishops and deacons in the mitre of Osiris, amid the shouts of thousands, they start upon a round of the whole city. The church bells ring their loudest; while a myriad crackers, thrown down and bursting, make the sound of innumerable instruments of percussion. Perhaps the crackle of the castanets when Adonis, the sleeping youth, raised his hand was the signal for this.

The gilded galleon dances before them. And so the procession sets out. The huge obelisk of the Guild of Farmers is the first to move. Its bearers take away the props of wood and lift it to their shoulders. It sways and totters, and begins to march. Behind it comes the pyramid of the Husbandmen and Reapers; and the heroic figure of Judith, holding the head of Holofernes high before her, appears to shake and tremble. Obelisk follows obelisk: Cobblers, Tailors, Gardeners, Butchers, Bakers, Grocers and Wine Vendors. All advancing. A procession of pyramids, of obelisks, of marching towers.

Saltarello

The whole town seethes, and roars, and surges with excitement.

The rites of the golden age are restored, for a day and night. Osiris, the son of Saturn, comes to life. He has returned from India. The chains are taken from the statues; and images of the gods are carried in triumph. It is his golden reign. He is met with dancing towers. There is magic in the air. It is a festival of fertility. Why does the youth in the caique, which is borne along, hold in his hand a pomegranate flower? Why could the statue of Judith be holding a sheaf of corn, and not a severed head? Or the obelisk of the Gardeners be preceded by a youth who holds a cornucopia? Why had dead Adonis a castanet in his hand? We meet a troop of children who have gauze wings upon their shoulders; and a full brass band plays the march from Moisé in Egitto. The shepherds' bagpipes, the pifferari or the zampognari, that come up at Christmas from Calabria; is it imagination. Do we not recognize their sound? And we hear, upon all sides, the rhythm of the tarantella. They are dancing in the wineshops; in the streets; in the vineyards. The wreathing, twining tarantella danced among the vines, in sight of distant Vesuvius. The tambourine is struck in frenzy. It is midday: the golden noon has come. There is the firing of cannon from the barracks. And a fanfare of bugles. Wherever we look, an obelisk, a pyramid, walks or dances. The Stylite gods are carried on their towers, with choirs and bands of music in their lower storeys.

The tower of the Reapers or Husbandmen emerges. A golden sickle is its emblem. Will it not march with its flail into the harvest? It must be a statue of Priapus upon the obelisk of the Gardeners. He is the god of orchards and of gardens, born to the goddess Venus after she had gone to meet Bacchus coming back in triumph from the Indies. Or some say Adonis was the father. What, then, of the tower of the Wine Vendors? And of the seven others?

Final of Nine Bands at Once

It is a delirious and haunting dream. Are the actors still shouting on the board outside their theatre? Noises of the fair mix with the festival. Booths or shops were open on the day Adonis died. Someone haggled for a pomegranate ; for a clutch of eggs ; for a lark in a wicker cage. And so it must continue. What is that droning? Will the nine towers go toppling down? Ah no! it is the golden age. Or the noon of that, declining to a golden sunset. With singing and dancing, and crashing of cymbals. The pagan gods have been restored to life. There go their palanquins, in the streets and squares of Nola.

NOTE.—The Queen of Tory, facing page 68, was photographed on the mainland opposite Tory Island by the owner of the negative in about 1934. Accompanying him were his brother and the late Mr. Robert Byron. Tory Island, pronounced ‘Torry’, the ‘isle of towers’, is seven miles off the Northern coast of Donegal. It is some eight hundred acres in extent ; in 1891 it had a population of 348, supported largely by lobster fishing, but the inhabitants have now shrunk to 250. A gunboat, the *Wasp*, which was sent to collect the dues, was wrecked on 22 September 1884, with the loss of all but six on board. At that time there were no priests on the island. The Queen, who was in exile, was supported by the offerings of her subjects, and did no work. She was the daughter of the last king, and the tiny stature was said to be peculiar to the dynasty. She was unmarried ; but had a brother who was a dwarf in a circus in the U.S.A. She has since died, but we have been unable to discover any further particulars about this most curious, and possibly Pictish, survival. Her family were said to have reigned on Tory Island from time immemorial.

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